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WILD SPORTS

OF

THE WEST.

WITH LEGENDARY TALES

AND

LOCAL SKETCHES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "STORIES OF WATERLOO."

"And sure it is yet a most beautifull and sweet countrey as any is under heaven, being stored throughout with many goodly rivers, replenished with all sorts of fish most abundantly, sprinkled with many very sweet islands and goodly lakes, like little inland seas, that will even carry shippes upon their waters."—*Spenser's State of Ireland*, 1596.

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CONTENTS

OF

THE SECOND VOLUME.

LETTER XXVI.

Bad Roads—Native Horses—Cairns—Bridge of Ballyveeny—Our Beat—Mid-day on the Moors—Hints to Grouse-shooters—Finding Game—Wild Scenery—The ruined Chapel—The Well—Act of Penance—Storm in Mountains—The deserted Burying-place—Our Return—The Colonel's Method of Rabbit-shooting—A Disappointment . . . . . Page 9

LETTER XXVII.

The Legend of Knock-a-thample 16

LETTER XXVIII.

Visit to the Mountain Hut—The Colonel—An Argument, and a Wager—No Honesty among Anglers—State of the River—Mogh-a-dioul—Father Andrew's Flies—Splendid Scenery—Its effect upon me and my Companion—Beautiful Pool—The Otter—A curious Scene—The Colonel's Troubles—Wager decided—A new Bet—A Salmon killed—Conversation—The Colonel out-manœuvred. 26

LETTER XXIX.

The Gold Snuff-box. 34

LETTER XXX.

The Otter-killer's Return—Craniology—Superstitions—Sea-horse—Master-otter—Anecdotes of it—Ghosts and Fairies—Their Influence upon Men and Animals—Cure of Witchcraft—Holy Lakes—Lough Keirawn—Its Butter Fishery—The Faragurta—Its Causes, Imaginary and Real—Cures and Cases—Swearing—Comparative Value upon the Book, the Vestment, and the Scull—The Clearing of Miss Currigan—An Uncatholic Cook. 43

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LETTER XXXI.

Fresh Arrivals—The Priest's Reception—The Lodge alarmed—Preparations for Deer-stalking — State of the Garrison — The Mountain Lake—The Peasant's Adventure—Carrig-a-binniogh—The Ascent—Prospect from the Summit—The Ravine and Red-deer—A Highland Ambuscade—The Catastrophe . . . 50

LETTER XXXII.

Deer brought home—Dinner—Gastronomic Reflections—Grouse Soup—Roasted Salmon—Cooking *pour et contre*—Carouse commences—Symptoms of Inebriety—Night in the Hills—Coffee *al fresco*—Temperance Society—A Bacchanalian Group—Auld lang syne—Borrowing a Congregation—The Company dispersed . 59

LETTER XXXIII.

Dancing kept up—Effects of Poteen on the Company—Ball ends—Rainy Night—Morning—Pattigo—A long Swim—Breakfast—An Incident—Fox-catcher bitten by a Wild Cat—Ferocity of that Animal—Anecdotes of them—House Cats frequently run wild—Destructive to Rabbit Warrens—Cat-killing extraordinary—The Deer-skin—Snow fatal to the Red-deer—Anecdote of a Hind and Fawn—Blistered Foot—Simple Remedy—My Descent by "The Mother's Side." 71

LETTER XXXIV.

The Legend of Rose Roche 78

LETTER XXXV.

Mountain Loughs—Trout—Their Varieties—Otter Haunt—The Upper Lake—Goose-fishing—Weather breaks—Prospect of leaving the Cabin—Traits of Character—Crimes—Abduction—Causes—Murder—Why prevalent—Distillation; its Extent and Cause—Anecdote of a Peasant's Ruin 92

LETTER XXXVI.

Day fixed for our Departure—Party separate—Last day's Shooting—The Secret Valley—The Fishers—Curious Incident—Dinner—An Alarm—Night Search for the Otter-killer—The old Man found—His Recovery—Narrative of the Accident 99

LETTER XXXVII.

The Otter-killer carried to the Lodge—Fishing homewards—Angling closes for the Season—Remarks—Feelings on the Occasion—Smuggler appears—Landing a Cargo—Captain Mathews—The Jane—Cutter stands out to Sea—Hooker on a Rock—Traveller alarmed—Anecdote of an Englishman . . . 106

Memoir of a Gentleman who would not do for Galway . . 115

LETTER XXXVIII.

Morning Alarm—Death of the Otter-killer—General Grief—Night Excursion—Herring-fishery—Our Reception—Beal Fires—The Wake—The Funeral—Anecdote of a Dog—A deserted House. 137

LETTER XXXIX.

Weather cha[illegible]—Symptoms of Winter—Animal Appearances—Night Passage of Barnacles—Grey Plover—Hints for shooting Plover—Wild Geese—Swans—Ducks—Burke transported—Evening at the Lodge—Feminine Employments . . . 145

LETTER XL.

Colonel leaves us—Last Visit to Achil—Snipes and Woodcocks—Their Migration—Solitary Snipe—Cock-shooting in Achil—Mountain Covers—Cock-shooting: its Accidents—Anecdotes—An unlucky Companion 151

LETTER XLI.

Dull Evening—Memoir of Hennessey 157

LETTER XLII.

My Departure fixed—Coast suited to an Ornithologist—God-sends—An ocean Waif—My last Day—Coursing—Size of Hares—Fen-shooting—Kill a Bittern—Castle of Doona—Fall of the Tower—Netting Rabbits—Reflections—Morning—Passage through the Sound—Hennessey—Departure from the Kingdom of Connaught 164

LETTER XLIII.

Moral and Physical Condition of the West, past and present . 170

LETTER XLIV.

Hunting—Men—Horses and Hounds—Game—Conclusion. 181

Appendix 189

WILD SPORTS
OF
THE WEST.

LETTER XXVI.

Bad Roads—Native Horses—Cairns—Bridge of Ballyveeny—Our Beat—Mid-day on the Moors—Hints to Grouse-shooters—Finding Game—Wild Scenery—The Ruined Chapel—The Well—Act of Penance—Storm in Mountains—The Deserted Burying-place—Our Return—The Colonel's Method of Rabbit-shooting—A Disappointment.

I VERILY believe that no people upon earth are more easily satisfied in roads than the natives of Ballyveeney. A narrow strip of rough gravel along the sea-beach, a mountain watercourse, tolerably disencumbered of its rocks, or practicable passage across a bog, provided it be but fetlock deep, are considered by the inhabitants of this wild peninsula to be excellent horse-ways.

That accidents do not more frequently occur is marvellous. But the horse is born in the wilderness, and if there be a practicable path, he appears to know it by intuition. Hence the rider traverses with impunity a morass in which Colonel Thornton* would have been ingulfed, and skirts a dizzy precipice with no more apprehension than a cockney wayfaring upon a turnpike-trust. "Use lessens marvel," quoth Sir Walter Scott,—and I, who formerly witnessed the accoutrement of these Calmuc-looking coursers with a lively anticipation of broken bones, now stumble through a defile, or cross a bog with all the indifference of a native.

Having despatched the dogs and keeper, we arranged

* Appendix, No. I.

our beat and started after breakfast. The road by which we reached our shooting ground is the sole means by which this, our *terra incognita*, is connected with the rest of Christendom. It is rough and dangerous in the extreme, and impracticable to every quadruped but the ponies of the country. In place of mile-stones, which mark better frequented roads, heaps of irregularly-sized pebbles meet the eye, and a stranger will be at a loss to assign their uses. They are melancholy memorials of uncivilized society, and either mark the scene of murder, or the place where a corpse has been rested in the progress of a funeral. These tumuli are numerous—and many a wild and fearful record of former violence is associated with them. The greater portion of the *cairns* record loss of life, consequent upon drunkenness; and the stone, at present, appears as fatal as the *middoge** in former days.

We left our horses at the old bridge of Ballyveeney, and proceeded to make an extensive circle of the moors, skirting, as we went along, the bases of the ridge of hills which shuts out Erris from the interior.

It was eleven o'clock when the dogs were uncoupled. The breeze was brisk and warm, and the ground was either undulated into hillocks, or intersected by rivulets, whose broken banks were thickly covered with luxurious heath. It was a beat on which a grouse-shooter would risk a kingdom, it realized our expectations, and we found game abundantly.

Hunting for grouse during the basking hour of the day is rigidly prohibited by all gentlemen who compile sporting directories; and yet every shooter knows, that at these proscribed hours, himself is commonly on the moors. Morning and evening, when the birds are on foot in search of food, is undoubtedly preferable to the duller portion of the day, when they are accustomed to indulge in a *siesta*. But, generally, some considerable distance must be travelled before the sportsman can reach his beat from his quarters. The morning is consumed on horseback or in the shooting-cart; the same road must be again accom-

* Appendix, No. II.

plished before night; and hence, the middle of the day is, of necessity, the portion devoted to pursuit of game.

To find the birds, when, satisfied with food, they leave the moor to bask in some favourite haunt, requires both patience and experience; and here the mountain-bred sportsman proves his superiority over the less practised shooter. The packs then lie closely, and occupy a small surface on some sunny brow or sheltered hollow. The best-nosed dogs will pass within a few yards, and not acknowledge them; and patient hunting, with every advantage of the wind, must be employed, to enable the sportsman to find grouse at this dull hour.

But if close and judicious hunting be necessary, the places to be beaten are comparatively few, and the sportsman's eye readily detects the spot where the pack is sure to be discovered. He leaves the open feeding grounds for heathery knowes and sheltered valleys—and, while the uninitiated wearies his dogs in vain over the hill-side, where the birds, hours before, might have been expected, the older sportsman profits by his experience, and seldom fails in discovering the dell or hillock where, in fancied security, the indolent pack is reposing.

We had been upon the moor some hours—our walk was enlivened by success, and the time had arrived when the commissariat was required, and old John's supplies were ordered from the rear. A rivulet was reported to be *just round the hill*, and thither our course was directed.

We turned a rugged brow suddenly, and never did a sweeter spot present itself to an exhausted sportsman; and resting on the bank of a ravine, where a small stream trickled over a precipice, forming beneath its brow a basin of crystal water, we selected this for our "*bivouac.*" Wild myrtle and shrub-like heather clothed the opposite sides, and one spot, where the rivulet *elbowed* back, was covered with short green moss, that seemed rather an effort of human art than a piece of natural arrangement.

Here we rested—and while baskets were unpacked, and the cloth rested upon the velvet surface we reposed upon, I looked with feelings which I cannot describe upon the wild and melancholy scene below.

It was a ruined chapel and deserted burying-place—one gable of the building alone was standing, and from beneath the ivied wall, a spring gushed out, and united itself with the rivulet I have described. A stone cross, whose rude workmanship showed its antiquity, was erected beside the fountain; and although the cemetery had long since been deserted, a circle round the well* was freshly worn in the turf, and a woman at the moment was performing an act of devotion on her bare knees, making an occasional pause to offer up a prayer and drop a bead from her rosary.

The valley had a solemn and imposing character; every thing about it was lonely and desolate. No traces of human visits were discernible; no pathway led to the ruin,—all was deep unbroken solitude; a hallowed and melancholy spot, where the living seldom presumed to approach the mansions of the dead.

The breeze fell, the air became unusually oppressive, and the hill behind robbed us of the little wind that still partially cooled the sultry atmosphere; a distant muttering among the mountains was faintly heard, and a sound like a rising stream was audible. Suddenly, a black cloud rose like magic upon the summit of the mountain, and a flash of light succeeded. "The storm is on," said my kins-

* The following passage is quoted from "*The Minstrelsy [of the Border.*"—"Many run superstitiously to other wells, and there obtain, as they imagine, health and advantage; and then they offer bread and cheese, or money, by throwing them into the well." And again, "In the bounds of the lands of Eccles, belonging to a lineage of the name of Maitland, there is a loch called *the Dowloch*, of old resorted to, with much superstition, as medicinal both for men and beasts, and that with such ceremonies as are shrewdly suspected to have begun with witchcraft, and increased afterward by magical directions. For bringing of a cloth or somewhat that did relate to the bodies of men and women, and a shoe or tether belonging to a cow or horse, and these being cast into the loch, if they did float, it was taken for a good omen of recovery, and a part of the water carried to the patient, though to remote places, without saluting or speaking to any they met by the way; but if they did sink, the recovery of the party was hopeless. This custom was of late much curbed and restrained; but since the discovery of many medicinal fountains near this place, the vulgar, holding that it may be as medicinal as these are, at this time begin to reassume their former practice."—*Macfarlane's MSS.*

man, and leaving the attendants to discuss the fragments of the feast where they might best obtain shelter, we hurried down the hill, and couched beneath the ruins of the chapel.

There is more grandeur in an alpine storm than can be imagined by those who have not witnessed its effect. As the thunder crashes over the hills, and, miles away, is reverberated from the opposite mountains, the loneliness of the wilderness is in fine keeping with the anger of the elements. The rain-drops now fell faster,—quick and vivid flashes burst from the southern heavens, and roll after roll succeeded, like sustained discharges of artillery. The dogs, in evident alarm, cowered at our feet, soliciting mortal protection from what instinct told them were the visitations of an awful power. Suddenly, one prolonged and terrific crash burst overhead—a deluge of rain descended—and rapidly as it came on the storm passed away—the peals became fewer and more distant, and in five minutes died in sullen murmursa mong the distant hills.

"Is not this, indeed, sublimity?" said my kinsman, as he broke a silence of some minutes. "To convey ideas of the grand and terrible, give me a storm in the mountains, and let it be viewed thus; sheltered by the ivied walls of a 'toppling' ruin, and surrounded by the dwellings of the dead."

"How comes it," I inquired, "that contrary to the known attachment of the lower Irish for ancient places of interment, this seems to be neglected and disused?"

"You are right," he replied, "although it was once the only burying-ground to which the inhabitants of this district conveyed the dead for interment, more than two centuries have elapsed since it has been abandoned. There is a curious tradition connected with its desecration, which Antony will be too happy in narrating, and as the clouds appear collecting on the hills, I propose that we retreat in good time, for it is rare to find such shelter on the moors as that afforded us by the ruins of Knock-a-thample."*

* Anglice—the church of the hill.

Even the sublime and beautiful may be enjoyed to satiety, and we agreed that one thunder-storm is sufficient for the day. The game-bags, upon examination, produced twenty brace of grouse, and a leash of mountain hares. For moderate men we had done enough, and we could dispense with the evening shooting. Accordingly, we left our attendants to follow at their leisure, and mounting our Cossack cavalry, set off at a killing pace "over bank, bush, and scaur," nor drew bridle until we reached the sand-banks, where the boat, with Pattigo and his companions, were awaiting our arrival.

Nor have we been the only denizens of the lodge whose exertions have this day been successful. The colonel has spent the forenoon in the sand-banks, much to his own satisfaction, in slaying rabbits, and studying the Morning Post. To unite the sportsman and politician may at first sight seem difficult—but, ensconcing himself in a good position, the commander waits patiently for a shot, and, confiding loading and look-out to *Andy Bawn*, whose attention since the unfortunate affair of the portmanteau has been redoubled—he coolly proceeds with the *debate*, until a rabbit is reported within range of the favourite *Spanish barrel** by his assistant gunner. This mode of shooting the colonel recommends, provided the day and the debate be *warm*. In winter, he may be induced occasionally to take the side of a sunny cover, but gout and rheumatism are ever presented to his imagination, and he would not "wet a foot for all the birds upon Brae Mar."

After dinner, I reminded my kinsman of the promised legend of Knock-a-thample, and the otter-killer was ordered to the presence. But on inquiry, Antony had been professionally called off to a distant village upon the coast, to minister to a broken head, and had taken his departure in a four-oared boat with as much ceremony as though he had been *surgeon-general*. I felt, and expressed my disappointment. "And are you really curious about this wild tradition?" asked our host. "I believe this is one of many legends which, during a terrible winter, I amused

* Appendix, No. III.

myself by transcribing." Opening a drawer, he took out a commonplace book, and marked the page. Finding no inclination to sleep when I retired for the night, I heaped more bog-wood on the fire, and, before I slept, read the following specimen of the "wild and wonderful."

LETTER XXVII.

THE LEGEND OF KNOCK-A-THAMPLE.

In the valley of Knock-a-thample, beside a ruined church and holy well, the shattered walls of what had been once a human habitation are still visible. They stand at a bowshot distance from the fountain, which, instead of a place of penance for ancient crones and solitary devotees, was visited two centuries since for a very different purpose.

The well, although patronised by Saint Catharine, a lady of as determined celibacy as ever underwent canonization, had one peculiar virtue, which, under her especial superintendance, it might not have been expected to possess. Indeed, in every-day complaints, its waters were tolerably efficacious; but, in cases of connubial disappointments, when the nuptial bed had been unfruitful, they proved an absolute specific; and in providing an heir for an estate, when "hope deferred had made the heart sick," there was not in the kingdom of Connaught a blessed well that could hold a candle to that of Knock-a-thample.

Numerous as the persons were whom the reputation of the fountain collected from a distance, few returned without experiencing relief. Occasionally, a patient appeared whose virgin career had been a little too protracted, and to whom the rosary, rather than the cradle, was adapted—and so thought Saint Catharine—though her water was unequalled, yet she had neither time nor inclination to work miracles eternally; consequently, those ancient candidates for the honours of maternity returned precisely as they came: to expend holy water on such antique customers was almost a sinful waste—their presumption was unpardonable—it was enough to vex a saint, and even put the blessed patroness of Knock-a-thample in a passion,

Holy water, like prophecy, appears to be of little value at home, and hence the devotees usually came from some distant province. The soil, indeed, might then have possessed the same anti-Malthusian qualities for which it is so remarkable at the present day. Certainly, the home-consumption of Knock-a-thample was on a limited scale—and the herdsman and his wife, who then occupied the ruined cottage near the church, owed their winter comforts to the munificence of the stranger pilgrims who, during the summer season, resorted in numbers to the well.

It was late in October, and the pilgrimages were over for the year—winter was at hand—the heath was withered, and the last flower had fallen from the bog-myrtle—the *bouillies** were abandoned, and the cattle driven from the hills. It was a dark evening; and the rain which had been collecting on the mountains began to fall heavily, when a loud knock disturbed the inhabitants of the cabin. The door was promptly unbarred, and a young and well-dressed stranger entered, received the customary welcome, with an invitation to join the herdsman's family, who were then preparing their evening meal. The extreme youth and beauty of the traveller did not escape the peasant's observation, although he kept his cap upon his head, and declined to put aside his mantle.

An hour after the young stranger had arrived, another, and a very different visiter, had demanded lodging for the night. He belonged also to another country, and for some years had trafficked with the mountain peasantry, and was known among them by the appellation of *the Red Pedler*. He was a strong, undersized, and ill-visaged man, mean in his dress, and repulsive in his appearance. The pedler directed a keen and inquisitive look at the belated traveller, who, to escape the sinister scrutiny of his small but piercing eyes, turned to where the herdsman's wife was occupied in preparing the simple supper. The peasant gazed with wonder at her guest; for never had so fair a face been seen within the herdsman's dwelling, while her eyes were still bent

* Appendix, No. IV.

upon the stranger, a fortuitous opening of the mantle displayed a sparkling cross of exquisite beauty, which hung upon the youth's bosom: and more than once, as it glittered in the uncertain light of the wood-fire, she remarked the rich and sparkling gem.

When morning came, the pilgrim took leave of the hospitable peasants, and as he inquired the road to the holy well, slipped a rose-noble into the hand of the herdsman's wife. This was not unnoticed by the Red Pedler, who proffered his services as guide, which the youth modestly, but firmly, declined. The pilgrim hastened to the fountain, performed the customary ceremonies before noon, and then took the mountain path, leading through an opening in the hills, to a *station** which, though particularly lonely, was usually selected by good Catholics for a last act of devotion when returning from visiting the blessed well. The pedler, who on various pretences had loitered near the place, soon afterward departed in the same direction.

That night the herdsman's family sought repose in vain:—wild, unearthly noises were heard around the hovel; and shriek and laughter, awfully mingled together, were borné upon the breeze which came moaning from the mountains. The peasant barred his door and grasped his wood-axe; his wife, with trembling fingers, told her rosary over again and again. Morning broke; and harassed by alarms, they sunk to sleep at last. But their slumbers were rudely broken—a gray-haired monk roused them hastily—horror was in his looks, and with difficulty he staggered to a seat. Gradually he collected strength to tell his fearful errand—the young and lovely devotee lay in the mountain glen, before Saint Catharine's cross, a murdered corpse!

The tidings of this desperate deed flew through the country rapidly. The body was carried to the herdsman's cabin. For many hours life had been extinct, and the distorted countenance of the hapless youth bespoke the mortal agony which had accompanied the spirit's flight. One deep wound was in his side, inflicted evi-

* A place of penance frequented by Catholic devotees.

dently by a triangular weapon; and the brilliant cross and purse of gold were gone.

The women from the adjacent villages assembled to pay the last rites to the remains of the murdered pilgrim. Preparatory to being laid out, the clothes were gently removed from the body, when a cry of horror burst from all—*the pilgrim* was *a woman!* Bound by a violet riband, a bridal ring rested beside her heart; and from unequivocal appearances, it was too evident that the fell assassin had committed a double murder.

The obsequies of the unhappy lady were piously performed; the mountain girls decked her grave with flowers; and old and young, for many a mile around, offered prayers for the soul of the departed. The murder was involved in mystery—the peasants had their own suspicions, but fear caused them to be silent.

A year passed—the garland upon the stranger's grave was carefully renewed—the village maidens shed many a tear as they told her melancholy story; and none passed the turf which covered the murdered beauty without repeating a prayer for her soul's repose.

Another passed—and the third anniversary of the pilgrim's death arrived. Late on that eventful evening, a tall and noble-looking stranger entered the herdsman's cottage. His air was lofty and commanding; and though he wore a palmer's cloak, the jewelled pommel of his rapier glanced from beneath the garment, and betrayed his knightly dignity. The beauty of his manly countenance forcibly recalled to the peasants the memory of the ill-starred stranger. But their admiration was checked by the fierce, though melancholy expression, of the handsome features of the stranger; and if they would have been inclined to scrutinize him more, one stern glance from his dark and flashing eye imperiously forbade it. Supper was prepared in silence, until, at the knight's request, the herdsman detailed minutely every circumstance connected with the lady's murder.

While the peasant's narrative proceeded, the stranger underwent a terrible emotion, which his stern resolution could not entirely conceal. His eyes flared, his brows contracted till they united; and before the tale was ended, he leaped from his seat, and left the cabin hastily.

He had been but a few minutes absent, when the door opened, and another visiter entered with scanty ceremony, and, though unbidden, seated himself upon the stool of honour. His dress was far better than his mien, and he assumed an appearance of superiority which, even to the peasants, appeared forced and unnatural. He called authoritatively for supper, and the tones of his voice were quite familiar to the herdsman. With excited curiosity, the peasant flung some dried flax upon the fire, and by the blaze, recognised at once the well-remembered features of the *Red Pedler!*

Before the peasant could recover his surprise, the tall stranger entered the cottage again, and approached the hearth. With an air which could not be disputed, he commanded the intruder to give place. The waving of his hand was obeyed, and with muttered threats the pedler retired to the settle. The knight leaned against the rude walls of the chimney, and remained absorbed in bitter thought until the humble host told him that the meal was ready.

If a contrast were necessary, it would have been found in the conduct of the strangers at the board. The knight ate like an anchorite, while the pedler indulged his appetite largely. The tall stranger tempered the *aqua vitæ* presented by the host copiously with water, while the short one drank fast and deep, and appeared anxious to steep some pressing sorrow in the goblet. Gradually, however, his brain felt the influence of the liquor—and unguarded from deep and repeated draughts, he thus addressed the host.

"Markest thou a change in me, fellow?"

"Fellow!" quoth the peasant, half affronted; "three years ago we were indeed *fellows;* for the *Red Pedler* often sought shelter here, and never was refused."

"*The Red Pedler!*" exclaimed the tall stranger, starting from his revery as if an adder had stung him, and fixing his fiery glance upon the late visiter, he examined him from head to foot.

"You will know me again, I trow," said the pedler, with extraordinary assurance.

"*I shall,*" was the cold reply.

"Well," said the new-comer, "though three years since I bore a pack, I'll wager a rose-noble that I have more money in my pouch than half the beggarly knights from Galway to Athlone. There!" he exclaimed, as he flung his cloak open, "*there* is a weighty purse, and *here* a trusty *middoge*, and a fig for knighthood and nobility!"

"Slave!" said the stranger, in a voice that made the peasants tremble, "breathe not another word until thou hast satisfied my every question, or, by the Mother of Heaven! I'll cram my rapier down thy false throat;" and starting on his feet, he flung his mantle on the floor.

Though surprised, the pedler was not discomfited by the dignity and determination of his antagonist.

"Yes!" he suddenly replied, "I wear no rapier—but this *middoge* has never failed me at my need," and drawing from his bosom a long triangular weapon, he placed it on the table—"Sir Knight," he continued, "the handle of my tool is simple deer-horn, but, by the mass! I have a jewel in my breast that would buy thy tinselled pommel ten times."

"Thou liest, slave!" exclaimed the knight.

"To the proof then," said the pedler, and opening a secret pocket, he produced a splendid cross.

"Villain!" said the tall stranger, under deep emotion, "surely thou hast robbed some hapless traveller?"

"No!" replied the pedler, with a cool smile; "I was beside the owner of this cross when his last sigh was breathed!"

Like lightning the stranger's sword flashed from its scabbard.

"Murderer!" he shouted, in a voice of thunder, "for three years have I wandered about the habitable earth, and my sole object in living was to find thy caitiff self; a world would not purchase thee one moment's respite." And before the wretch could more than clutch his weapon, the knight's sword passed through his heart—the hilt struck upon the breast-bone, and the Red Pedler did not carry his life to the floor!

The stranger for a moment gazed upon the breathless body, and having with the dead man's cloak removed the

blood from his blade, replaced it coolly in the sheath. The pedler's purse he flung scornfully to the peasant, but the cross he took up, looked at it with fixed attention, and the herdsman's wife remarked that more than one tear fell upon the relic.

Just then the gray-haired monk stood before him; he had left his convent to offer up the mass, which he did on every anniversary of the pilgrim's murder. He started back with horror as he viewed the bleeding corpse; while the knight, having secured the cross within his bosom, resumed his cold and haughty bearing.

"Fellow!" he cried to the trembling peasant, "hence with that carrion. Come hither, monk—why gapest thou thus? hast thou never seen a corpse ere now? Approach, I would speak with thee apart"—and he strode to the further end of the cottage, followed by the churchman.—"I am going to confide to thee what—"

"The penitent should kneel," said the old man, timidly.

"Kneel!" exclaimed the knight, "and to *thee*, my fellow-mortal! Monk, thou mistakest—*I am not of thy faith*, and I laugh thy priestcraft to derision. Hearken, but interrupt me not. The beauteous being whose blood was spilled in these accursed wilds, was the chosen lady of my love. I stole her from a convent, and wedded her in secret; for pride of birth induced me to conceal from the world my marriage with a fugitive nun. She became pregnant, and that circumstance endeared her to me doubly, and I swore a solemn oath, that if she brought a boy, I would at once announce him as my heir, and proclaim my marriage to the world. The wars called me for a time away. Deluded by the artifice of her confessor, my loved one was induced to come hither on a pilgrimage, to intercede with thy saint, that the burden she bore might prove a son. Curses light upon the shaveling that counselled that fatal journey! Nay, cross not thyself, old man, for I would execrate thy master of Rome had he been the false adviser. Thou knowest the rest, monk. Take this purse. She was of thy faith, and thou must say masses for her soul's health. Yearly shall the same sum be sent to thy convent; see that all that prayers

can do, be done—or, by my hopes of grace, thy hive of drones shall smoke for it. Doubt me not,—De Burgo will keep his word to the very letter. And now, farewell! I hurry from this fatal spot for ever; my train are not distant, and have long since expected me."

As he spoke, he took his mantle from the floor, and wrapped it round him carelessly; then, as he passed the spot where the body of the murderer lay, he spurned it with his foot, and pausing for a moment, looked at the monk—

"*Remember!*" he said, in a low voice, which made the old man shudder, and passing from the cabin, he crossed the heath, and disappeared.

But did not the terror of the herdsman's family abate with this departure; a dead man lay before them, and the floor was deluged with his blood. No human help was nigh, before daylight assistance could not be expected; and no alternative remained but to wait patiently for the morrow. Candles were lighted up, the hearth was heaped with fuel, and a cloth thrown over the corpse which they lacked the courage to remove. To sleep was impossible—and in devotional acts they endeavoured to while the night away. Midnight came; the monk was slumbering over his breviary, and the matron occupied with her beads, when a violent trampling was heard outside, and the peasant, fearing the cattle he had in charge were disturbed, rose to ascertain the cause. In a moment he returned. A herd of wild deer surrounded the cabin, and actually stood in a threatening attitude within a few paces of the door! While he told this strange occurrence to the monk, a clap of thunder shook the hovel to its centre—yells, and shrieks, and groans succeeded—noises so demoniac as to almost drive the listeners to madness, hurtled through the air, and infernal lights flashed through the crevices of the door and window. Till morning broke, these unearthly terrors continued without a moment's intermission.

Next day the villagers collected. They listened to the fearful story with dismay, while the melancholy fate of the gentle pilgrim was bitterly lamented. To inter the pedler's corpse was the first care; for the monk

swore by his patron saint that he would not pass another night with it over ground to be made a 'mitred abbot. A coffin was forthwith prepared, and with "maimed rites," the murderer was committed to the earth.

That masses were requisite to purify the scene of slaughter was indisputable—and with the peasants who had flocked from the neighbouring villages, the monk determined to pass that night in prayer. The blood-stains had been removed from the floor—the corpse had been laid in consecrated earth—and the office had commenced at midnight, when suddenly, a rushing noise was heard, as if a mountain torrent was swollen by the bursting of a thunder-cloud. It passed the herdsman's cabin while blue lights gleamed through the casement, and thunder pealed above. In a state of desperation, the priest ordered the door to be unclosed, and by the lightning's glare, a herd of red deer was seen tearing up the pedler's grave! To look longer in that blue infernal glare was impossible—the door was shut, and the remainder of the night passed in penitential prayer.

With the first light of morning, the monk and villagers repaired to the pedler's grave, and the scene it presented showed that the horrors of the preceding night were no illusion. The earth around was blasted with lightning, and the coffin was torn from the tomb, and shattered into a thousand splinters. The corpse was blackening on the heath, and the expression of the distorted features was more like that of a demon than of a man. Not very distant was the grave of his beautiful victim. The garland which the village girls had placed there was still fresh and unfaded; and late as the season was, the blossom was still upon the bog-myrtle, and the heath-flower was as bright and fragrant as though it were the merry month of June. "These are indeed the works of hell and heaven," ejaculated the gray friar. "Let no hand from this time forth pollute itself by touching yon accursed corpse."

Nightly, the same horrible noises continued. Shriek and groan came from the spot where the unburied murderer was rotting, while by day the hill fox and the eagle contended who should possess the body. Ere a

week passed, the villain's bones were blanching in the winds of heaven, for no human hand attempted to cover them again.

From that time the place was deserted. The desperate noises, and the frequent appearance of the pedler's tortured spirit, obliged the herdsman to abandon his dwelling, and reside in an adjacent village. The night of the day upon which he had removed his family and effects, a flash of lightning fell upon the cabin, and consumed the roof; and next morning nothing remained but black and rifted walls. Since that time the well is only used for penance. The peasant approaches not the desecrated burying-place if he can avoid it. The cattle are never known to shelter underneath the ruined walls—and the curse of God and man have fallen on *Knock-a-thample.*

LETTER XXVIII.

Visit to the Mountain Hut—The Colonel—An Argument, and a Wager—No Honesty among Anglers—State of the River—Mogh-a-dioul—Father Andrew's Flies—Splendid Scenery—Its effect upon me and my Companion—Beautiful Pool—The Otter—A curious Scene—The Colonel's Troubles—Wager decided—A new Bet—A Salmon killed—Conversation—The Colonel out manœuvred.

THE colonel has girded up his loins for the mountains, and with the assistance of Mogh-a-dioul, a pony of unhappy name, but good and enduring qualities, he purposes to favour us with his company during our sojourn at the cabin in the hills. While we traverse the moors, the commander will infest the river; or, if the day be questionable, he will remain, like honest Sancho, "beside the flesh-pots." To him, the "meminisse juvabit" will apply. Thirty years ago, with his lamented contemporary, our host's father, the soldier, who was then a keen and accomplished sportsman, spent many a happy hour upon the heaths. To his memory every dell and hillock is still green: and hence our evening details will recall to him those happier recollections of youthful pastime, which, when "life was new," he had once delighted to indulge in.

The colonel fishes well; and I, at least my vanity believes it, have improved marvellously—I really *can* throw a line, and this the priest avers upon the word of a churchman. I begin also to have what the Scotch call a *gloamin'* of what forms the composition of a killing fly. But my pride has been sadly abated. Last night, during a stormy controversy, touching the comparative merits of Pull-garrow and Pull-buoy, upon which the host and commander held opinions opposite as the antipodes, to prove that I belonged to a "thinking people," I raised my voice in favour of the *yellow pool*. Our host in dudgeon having premised that one of us was blind, and the other a botch, declared by the shade of Walton, that on any given day he would kill more fish than we both could

produce together. This, as every Irish argument ends in a duel or a bet, has terminated, *fortunately*, in the latter; and though the wager be not so deep as Hamlet's "Barbary horses" to "French rapiers, poniards, and their assigns," yet the respective parties appear deeply interested in the result. To-morrow will decide the question, and settle the doubtful point of scientific superiority between the rival artists.

It strikes me forcibly, that among Irish anglers the doctrine of *meum et tuum* is but indifferently understood. My kinsman and the commander are constantly lamenting a loss of property, and certainly they do not indulge in these *jeremiads* without good reason. I never observe the colonel's huge book forgotten for a few minutes, but it is unmercifully plundered by the host—and if the key of the latter's fly-drawer can be procured, the commander unlocks it without ceremony, and having explored its *arcana*, adopts liberally such articles as find favour in his sight. The housemaid has been suborned to abstract the colonel's casting-lines from his dormitory; and, as the host generally hides a favourite fly or two in the lining of his hat, I never pass the hall without finding the commander fumbling about the hat-stand. It was clearly stipulated and understood, that the flies with which to-morrow's match should be decided, were to be *bona fide* the handiwork of the respective parties; yet the colonel privately informs me that he has despatched a trusty envoy to the priest, to implore the gifted churchman to furnish him, *sub sigillo*, with *a cast* or two for the occasion; and the said envoy has covenanted to be at the commander's window with an answer "before a *mother's soul* is stirring."

The thunder-storm produced a considerable fresh in the river, as the rain fell abundantly in the hills. The stream however, had sufficient time to clear after the flood, and we found it in beautiful order. The wind is steady at north-west; and as the drafting has long since been discontinued, and the weirs lowered to permit the fish to enter from the sea without obstruction, old Antony declares that, as a fishing-day, nothing could be more favourable. We tossed for choice, and lost it. My kinsman

commences his work three miles up at his favourite Pullgarrow, while we fish from the mouth of the river. At five we meet at the cabin, and the party then producing the greater weight of fish, is conqueror. These preliminaries being adjusted, our opponent went off like an Arab, to join his aide-de-camp, Mr. Hennessey, who has all in readiness for his commencement, and, I suspect, a salmon or two already in the pannier.

The opening of our campaign is every thing but satisfactory—Mogh-a-dioul seems possessed with the demon of obstinacy; any advance towards the river is his aversion, and, as Pattigo expresses it, "the beast will neither *wear nor stay*." The commander's seat has been more than once perilled by his gambadoes; and, as we are informed that he is caparisoned with a bit, which is his abomination, there is but little chance of amendment in Mogh-a-dioul. This appears very like a plot against the colonel's person; and I fear that the midnight embassy to the priest will be more than countervailed by the manœuvres of our abler antagonist.

Both adepts made excellent professions of good faith at starting; but, as my kinsman left us, there was "a lurking devil in his eye" that augurs us no good fortune. The commander, too, talked in good set terms of "honourable conduct;" but precept and practice, I lament to say, are somewhat irreconcileable.

"*Andy*," he said, in his most insinuating manner, to our attendant; "*Andy Bawn*, you were always an obliging boy, and very handy with the gaff. Just keep your eyes about the banks as we go along; and if you can *snaffle* a salmon or two, why, the pannier will tell no tales, and weigh all the better."

To me, there never was a more delightful expedition; but my companion was cold to all the romance of nature, and engrossed with one consideration—to win his wager. While I was enraptured with the splendid scenery that each new point presented, the colonel was cursing his flies, and pouring anathemas on the priest. "How beautiful!" I exclaimed, as the sunshine fell upon a mountain valley, through which a little rivulet was winding, and whose waters, in the glare of light, danced down-

wards like a streak of molten silver. "How damned provoking!" responded my brother fisherman, "that the only decent fly in that cursed priest's collection should be tied upon a hook with no more point upon it than a hob-nail. Ah! Father Andrew! was this treatment for an old acquaintance—a man who would have trusted his life to you, and drink with you in the dark? Here, *Andy Bawn*, give me my book, and fling this most villanous assemblage of faded wool and ragged feathers into the next boghole. And now, my friend and fellow-labourer, leave the mountains alone, and think more of filling the fishing-baskets, or we are beaten men!"

We followed the course of the river for a distance of ten miles, stopping at the pools as we went along, but leaving the streams and shallows without a trial. As we proceeded up the hills, the scenery became wilder and more interesting: here and there, the moors were sprinkled with green hillocks, and the range of mountains behind was splendidly picturesque. The pools alone had beauty in my companion's eyes, and some of them were indeed magnificent. One was particularly romantic—it was a deep natural basin, formed by a sudden turning of the river, where the banks on either side were nearly perpendicular, and rose to a considerable height, and, to the water's edge, were thickly covered with hollies and hardy shrubs. At the upper end of the pool, a rock of immense magnitude reared its naked front, and shut out every other object. Round its base, the river forced its waters through a narrow channel, and at the other extremity, falling over a ledge of rocks, turned sharply round a hillock, and was lost sight of. There were but two points from which the angler could command the pool, for elsewhere the banks and underwood prevented his approach: one was a sand-bank about the centre, to which, by a narrow goat-path, the fisher could descend; the other, a small space immediately beneath the rock, of green and velvet-looking herbage. At this point the shepherds had erected a hut for occasional shelter, and never was a sweeter spot selected wherein to dream away a summer night. No human dwelling was in sight—deep and undisturbed solitude breathed around—the blue

and lucid pool before the cabin danced in the moonlight, or glittered in the first rays of morning—while the rushing waters of the river produced such melancholy and tranquillizing sounds, as would lull to rest any bosom untortured by mortal passions.

"Julius has been here before us, and has left some mementoes of his visit," said the colonel, pointing to foot-marks in the sand, and blood and fish-scales upon the pebbles; "I fear our bet is in jeopardy: verily, our worthy relative will never shame the proverb, that 'De'ils bairns have de'ils luck!' But what can the matter be among the salmon? in faith the pool appears bewitched."

As he spoke, I remarked the occurrence which the commander noticed. The fish, which upon our first arrival had risen merrily at the natural flies, ceased on a sudden altogether—now they rushed confusedly through the water, or threw themselves for yards along the surface. It was not the sullen plunge at an insect, or the vertical spring, when sport or food brings the salmon over water; but it was evident that there was some hidden cause of alarm, and we were not long left in doubt. Near the neck of the pool, an otter of the largest size showed himself for a moment, then darting under water, the same commotion ensued again. Before a minute elapsed, *Andy Bawn* pointed silently to a shoal beneath an overhanging bush, and *there* was the spoiler, apparently resting himself after his successful exertions, and holding a *four-pound* white-trout in his mouth. Either he noticed us, or had some more favourite haunt to feed in, for he glided into the deep water and we saw no more of him.

Although we found out that the otter and ourselves could not manage to fish in company, we ascertained that the pool was abundantly stocked with salmon:—during the period of the greatest alarm, at least a dozen fish were breaking the surface at the same time.

We reached the cabin after a day of excellent sport; but every thing on earth has its alloy, and two circumstances appear to cloud the sunshine of the commander's bosom. One is the inexplicable conduct of the

priest; the other, the repeated misconduct of Mogh-a-dioul. We have, to be sure, four fine salmon, and a score of good-sized sea-trouts; but the colonel swears that he lost his best fishing until he discarded the priest's flies; and it is probable, if their defects had been apparent at an earlier period, our baskets would have been considerably benefited by the discovery.

As we ascended the bank before the cabin door, our rival met us. He had left off fishing for some time, and had changed his dress entirely—"Come, brush up, dinner will be spoiled. Colonel, I trust that you and Mogh-a-dioul are on pleasing terms with each other. You stole my bridle, but, no apologies—I can ride *Crughadore* with a hay-band. Come—to scale at once, or dinner is not worth a gray groat. Hennessey, the steel-yard —produce—despatch—*one, two, three, four.* You killed *one* apiece, I presume, and Andy gaffed the other *two;* nay, commander of the faithful, look not so ferocious. What, no more! and is this paltry *creel* of fish the produce of the day? Colonel, I blush for you. Barely *forty pounds.* Turn that *clave** over, and put these gentlemen of the angle out of pain." As he spoke, the attendant emptied the contents of the pannier, and *nine well-sized salmon,* with a multitude of sea-trouts, rolled out upon the sward.

"By my faith!" exclaimed the commander, "these fish were never fairly killed; you drafted a hole or two, as surely as I am a sinner."

"The latter part of your remark I admit," said my kinsman, "the former I deny. By this virgin hand! every fish before you was killed by hook and line. Come, are you for another bet? For five pounds, and *within five minutes,* I'll kill another salmon, and make the number *ten!*"

"Done!" we exclaimed together.

"Hennessey, the rod; wet the flies below the pool, and in twenty seconds, yon cloud will be over the sun."

Before the cabin there is a tolerable hole, deep, but narrow. Where the stream runs in, the ripple is con-

* A horse basket.

siderable, and between it and the bank the deepest water lies. If there be a salmon in the pool, *there* is the spot to find him. My cousin sent the casting line in such masterly style into the opposite eddy as proclaimed him at once an adept, and at the second cast a salmon rose and took him.

He was but a light fish, and in less than three minutes was bounding upon the grass beside his dead companions. My kinsman handed the rod to the attendant.—"Gentlemen," he said, in mock heroics, "in your memories be all my bets remembered! And now to dinner, with what appetite you may."

"Well," said the commander, "*this beats Bannagher.** I would have given my corporal oath the knave had swept the river. His flies are absolute perfection! There's villany somewhere; but come along. The dinner must not cool, and the wine shall pay for it!"

* * * * *

"Julius," said the commander, as he extracted the third cork, "thy star predominated; a villanous combination of circumstances, with infernal flies, and an intractable pony, destroyed me. *Andy Bawn* (we are *beaten*, and the truth may be told), for the first time in his life, was taken with a fit of conscience, and actually refused to gaff a salmon. The very otters were combined against us, and disturbed the best pool upon the river, but *Pull-buoy*. I had no time to tie fresh flies."

"Or even send to Goolamore, to *borrow*," said my kinsman, dryly.

"Ah, hem," and the colonel appeared a little *bothered* —"I want no man's flies; my own, I find, will generally answer."

"And yet," said the host, "the priest, when he pleases, can tie a *killing one*."

"Why—ye—es, he does—a *leetle* coarse—but, let me see your casting-lines; I fear, my friend, that we had not the right colours up."

"*I fear so too;*" said our host, with much expression.

"By my conscience!" exclaimed the colonel, as he

* An Irish phrase synonymous with "this exceeds every thing."

scrutinized the casting-lines that were wound about my kinsman's hat, "I would have taken my oath on a bag-full of books, that this *mallard's wing* was tied by Father Andrew."

"And, by *my* conscience," returned the host, "you would not have been very far astray."

"And was this fair, Julius—to fish with any but your own?"

"Why, really, they looked so beautiful, that, for the life of me, I could not but put them up. But, my friend, the next time you despatch a midnight messenger, select a trustier one than *Currakeen**—and take a better opportunity to praise young Alice's '*black eyes*,' than when issuing your secret instructions. Nay, I will respect those blushes. The fact is, Currakeen was at your window before 'a *mother's soul was stirring*'—but, my dear colonel, he did me the favour to *first* call at *mine*. I merely took the liberty of exchanging a few flies—you fished with some old acquaintances, while I tried experiments with *Father Andrew's*. Come, the bets are off—we both violated treaties, and thus I renounce my victory, though my opinion of *Pull-garrow* is unalterable."

"Julius," said the commander, solemnly, "you'll be on the highway next. Breaking a letter open, I think, is an excellent preparative for stopping his majesty's mail."

"And in that case, I trust that you will be an accomplice. If one must swing, good society is every thing. Your demeanour at 'the fatal tree,' I am persuaded, would be exemplary. And yet, my dear Frank, although I treated Father Andrew's despatch with scanty ceremony, I never came within the clutches of the law but *once*, and that was, as old Jack says, through *villanous company*."

"Was that the time you stole the snuff box?" asked the commander.

"*I steal a snuff-box?* No—I deny the *theft*—I was only *an accessary* after all. But to clear my character, I must tell the story to my cousin."

* A by-name given to one of the endless tribe of *Malley*.

LETTER XXIX.

THE GOLD SNUFF-BOX.

It was the spring before my father's death. A vacation was at hand, and for some college irregularities, I had been deprived of my chambers as a punishment, and turned upon the town to shift as I best could. I fixed myself at the *Wexford Hotel* for the short time I intended remaining in the capital, and there formed my first acquaintance with Colonel B—— and Lieutenant K——, both of the —— Militia.

They arrived at "The Wexford" late one evening from Naas, where the regiment was then quartered, and were on their route to visit, on private business, "the realms beyond the Shannon."

I was alone in the parlour when the strangers arrived. They cast a wistful eye at a choice haddock, then in the very act of being served up as exordium to the dinner. The waiter in a whisper assured the belated travellers that he was convinced the young gentleman, meaning me, would share his fish and table-cloth. The request was very politely made, very politely granted, and down we sat, as if we had been bosom friends for a twelvemonth.

The colonel was an overgrown bombard—a vessel full-charged with good-humour and old port. He said odd things, and did them too. The subaltern was a squab-built snub-nosed strange sort of merry fellow, having a rich brogue and racy wit; and while the corpulent commander believed that he was humbugging the short lieutenant, the short lieutenant, all the while, was playing the devil with the corpulent commander. No two persons were ever better constructed to elicit reciprocal amusement; and they were, though opposites in every thing, as necessary to each other as "sheath to sword."

But there was a circumstance that united the strangers and myself directly. My friend, Lord L——, had just

got a majority in the colonel's regiment; and the said colonel and his companion were going that very night to a ball at the dowager's, who then lived in Rutland-square.

We finished a formidable portion of *Page's* best*—retired to dress, and afterward set off in a hackney-coach to the scene of our evening's amusement. I was three-deep in dancing engagements, and my first partner was already in the room—of course I separated from my companions directly, of whom, however, I caught a distant glance as they were formally presented to his aunt by Lord L——.

It was a crowded ball. I was dancing busily, and how my companions employed themselves never occasioned me a thought. At last supper was whispered to be on the *tapis*. Miss Carden and I—she was then a very pretty girl—had quietly slipped away from *the set*, to be in readiness for the crush, when we stumbled upon a snug whist-table in an unfrequented corner, and there I discovered my gallant friends actively engaged.

The unhappy men were partners. They had, moreover, been delivered into the hands of the dowager and Mrs. P——, an antiquated commoner. Both ladies were notorious for extraordinary luck, and a fortunate arrangement of always *cutting together*. It was further believed, that both were given to the good old rule of winning, *honestly if they could*—but *winning*.

It was evident at first sight that the soldiers were no matches for the gentlewomen. The rubber game was on the point of being decided just as we reached the table—the soldiers had it by honours, but, by a barefaced revoke, that would have been detected by any but the buzzards they were playing with, the ladies gained the point required, and had their claim allowed. "Supper is served," said Mrs. P——, with a satisfactory grin; "had we not better stop, Lady L——?" The gentlemen simultaneously popped their hands into the pockets of their nether garments. "In how much have I the honour to be your ladyship's debtor?" inquired the

* A celebrated wine-merchant, some thirty years ago.

colonel, with a gracious smile. Mrs. P—— instantly mumbled, with the rapidity of a bar-maid, "Ten points—three rubbers—*only nine guineas.*" The colonel started and stared. "*Nine devils !*—I mean *guineas !*" exclaimed *the sub*, in awful consternation. But the decree had gone forth. "They never played *higher*—deep play was detestable." The money was accordingly doled out, and I observed that the contents of the lieutenant's purse, after rendering this sweeping subsidy, were reduced to a solitary guinea.

At this moment the supper-rooms were thrown open, and away went the crowd. The dowagers were left to scramble up their winnings, and the soldiers, I presume, to execrate their own bad luck. Miss Carden and I, who witnessed the impudent revoke perpetrated by Mrs. P——, and passed over by my Lady L——, mutually decided, that, in common justice, both ladies should have been consigned for a month to the house of correction.

Supper, as all suppers have done, ended. I placed my handsome partner in her mother's carriage, and was then depositing myself in a hackney-coach, when I espied my military friends upon the steps, hailed them immediately, and embarking in the same vehicle, we were duly landed at "The Wexford."

"Waiter!" cried the colonel, in a voice of thunder, "some brandy and *red-hot* water. I wore my *thin tights* for the first time this six months," addressing me, "and, by Saint Patrick! my limbs are icicles. I drank two glasses of execrable Teneriffe; and, God knows, *one* would be a sufficient dose of poison for a gouty man like me. Arrah! waiter! have you it in the house? If you have not, say so, and I'll run out and save my life at the next tavern." But the waiter was prompt and the *house honest.* Up came the brandy and *materials;* and the colonel, relieved from the anticipated attack in his stomach, "breathed again."

I looked at my unfortunate friends, and never did men bear their misfortunes so differently. While the subaltern was in a phrensy, the commander was calm as a philosopher.

"Well, if the devil had his own," exclaimed the irritated lieutenant, "my Lady L—— would fry."

"Rowland," said the colonel, solemnly, "what the deuse tempted you to play? You don't understand the game, and I often told you so."

"But," said I, interrupting him, "the rubber was yours. Mrs. P—— made a scandalous revoke. How could it escape your observation? The young lady, who was leaning on my arm, was horrified at such barefaced cheating."

"I remarked it," said the lieutenant, "but I was ashamed to speak. I thought we were playing half-crown points!"

"I wish I had seen it," said the colonel. "Ah, Rowly, you're no wizard."

"Well, no matter; I have suffered enough," said the subaltern, testily. "If I have a rap left, after these swindling jades, but one solitary guinea to carry me to Connemara!"

"Pshaw! *beg*, man, *beg!* You have a face for any thing. I wonder how *I* stand upon the night's play."

"Nine guineas *minus*," said the subaltern, "unless you managed to fob off a light piece, or pass a counterfeit."

"That would be impossible," remarked the colonel, "for though the crush was desperate, and I thought, and wished that the table would be overturned, the dowager thumbed every guinea over as if she had played with a pickpocket. It was just then that I managed to secure a keepsake," as he produced a huge snuff-box of fine gold and antique workmanship from his side-pocket. I stared with wonder, while the subaltern ejaculated, "What a chance! Ah, colonel, you are the jewel! The box will pay our losses beautifully."

"I beg to be excused from a co-partnership," said the colonel, dryly. "Rowly, you might have stolen for yourself. I saw a pair of gold mounted spectacles upon the table, and a *vinaigrette*, of excellent device, lay beside you. No, no, Rowly, rob for yourself."

"And," said I, "my dear colonel, might I ask what may be the ultimate design which you harbour against the dowager's snuff-box?"

"Why, faith, my young friend, my plans are simple

enough. I'll give you and that *ommadawn*,"* pointing to his lieutenant, "an early dinner, and bring you to the play afterward. Well, it will be tolerably dark by that time. We'll pass St. Andrew's church—call next door—and get a worthy man who lives convenient, and who is very liberal in lending money to any body who leaves sufficient security behind him,—well, we'll get him, in short, to take the box at his own valuation."

"And if it should be discovered?"

"Oh, little fear of that. No, my friend, before you and I are in the boxes, *this box* will be in the melting-pot. The man is a considerate and conscientious dealer. No, no, all's safe with him."

We parted for the night. At noon, next day, we met at breakfast. I, although pretty conversant in odd adventures and mad freaks, was dying to see the conclusion of the snuff-box affair. We, of Trinity, often touched upon street-robbery in poles and rattles; and as far as public property went, were nowise scrupulous. I had once achieved a petty larceny, by running off with a pine-apple from a fruiterer's, for which, however, I had the grace to send payment in the morning. Still the colonel's *coup* was so superior to all this, that I was as much interested in the *denouement* as if I had been a principal concerned. At the appointed hour we regularly met in Dawson-street. Our host gave us the best dinner in Morrison's *carte*, and we had champaign, liqueurs, and a superabundant supply of the primest claret in the cellar.

Pending dinner, the parties made an amicable arrangement touching the disposition of the booty. The field officer was to share the surplus produce over the payment of the tavern bill; and the subaltern was to be the vender of the spoil.

It was nearly eight o'clock when we left Morrison's, and directed our course to the civil gentleman who lent money on good security. We entered an outer hall, and thence advanced into one encompassed by a tier of compartments, like confession-boxes. Rowly stepped into a

* Anglice, an idiot.

vacant stall, and we stood close behind to "aid, comfort, and counsel."

The money-dealer left an unfinished bargain with a tradesman's wife, to attend upon his better dressed customer. "Ah! hem—hem!" said the subaltern, rather *bothered* to open the negotiation—but the *Lombard* gave an encouraging simper, "a small advance wanted, I presume!"—Why, no—ah, hem!—wish to dispose of a trifle—a present,—no use for it,—but would not for the world it was known." The pawnbroker instantly presented his finger and thumb, to receive watch, ring, or jewel, according as the case might be.

The snuff-box was promptly displayed, and the harpy eye of the money-dealer turned rapidly from the box to the presenter: "Well, sir, pray what may be the value?"

"Really, can't say—a present—and—"

"Oh! ye-e-e-s—old gold—mere drug now-a-days—about three pound ten an ounce—once valuable—bullion then scarce—a year ago it would have been a very pretty *swag*."

"*Swag!* What do you mean?" cried the alarmed seller; "Zounds! do you think I stole it?"

"Oh, dear, *no-o!*—beg pardon—meant present. Here, the scales, John. Ah! ah! let me see—ay—standing beam—ah!—say fifteen pounds—full value, I assure you—the price to a pennyweight."

"Very well; I'm content: but if my friend discovered that I would part with his present—"

The broker raised his forefinger to his nose, and dropped his left eyelid with a striking expression—the look would have done honour to an Old Bailey practitioner. The money was told down upon the counter:—"The hammer, John!" A lean, ill-grown, ill-visaged dwarf produced a weighty one. There was a small anvil affixed to the bench; my Lady L——'s box received one mortal blow, and the attending imp swept the shattered fragments into a crucible.

What was the exact disposition of the assets I cannot pretend to say; but I believe they were fairly partitioned between the parties concerned.

About six months afterward, when passing through

the city, after my father's death, I met Lord L——, and he received me with his customary kindness. "You must dine with me to-day," he said. I pointed to my mourning coat. "Oh, you *must* come—the very place for one wishing to avoid the world. Since you left Dublin, my poor aunt has undergone such a change!—an infernal gang have got round her entirely; and she, who once only lived for whist, cannot be persuaded to touch a card. By Jove! the good lady is bewitched! But I have arranged with her, that the first crop-eared scoundrel, or female ranter I meet in Rutland-square, shall be the signal for my final abdication of Kildare-street—and she knows that I am positive. Do come: not a soul dines with me but that good, fat fellow, my colonel." I smiled as I recollected our last visit to the Square, and promised to be punctual.

I arrived some time before Lord L——, and found the dowager and my fat friend, the colonel, *tête-à-tête*. Beyond the customary interchange of civilities I did not interrupt them, receiving, however, from the commander a warm squeeze, and an inexpressibly comic look that recalled a volume of adventure. The old lady resumed the conversation which my entrée had suspended:—

"And you are six months absent, colonel!—Protect me! how time passes!—it should be a lesson—a tacit monitor, as Mr. Hitchcock happily expresses it. Well, there was a carnal minded, noisy crowd here; and I remember you lost three rubbers. How such vain imaginations will push aside the better seeds! Your partner was a well meaning gentleman, but never returned a lead. Oh me! that these vanities should be remembered! That very night, colonel, I met with a serious, I may say distressing loss. My cousin General Pillau's Indian snuff-box was stolen! I suspected—but judge not, as Mr. Heavyside said at the chapel yesterday. It was in my partner's hand the last time I ever saw it; the rush to supper came;—she—but we must be charitable. But here's my nephew—Oh that he was awake to gospel truth! Well, my dear George, what news since?"

"None, madam; only that your old friend's over—dead as Julius Cæsar. Mother P—— will never cut another honour!"

"Oh! George, do stop—for once be serious. Mrs. P—— dead! and I fear not prepared. Ah, me! poor Mrs. P——! Many a rubber she and I have played—she knew my system so well—finessed a *leetle* too much—But where am I running?—Well, *I hope* she was prepared—*but she stole the general's box!*"

"Phew! if she stole snuff-boxes, she'll fry for it now," said the colonel, taking share in the lament; "I hope, madam, it was merely a pretty toy, something not valuable."

"*A toy!* my dear sir; fine pale gold—invaluable for weight, age, and workmanship. Had you ever held it in your hand, you would never have forgotten it."

"Faith, and likely enough, my lady."

"George, love, if you would just speak to the executor. Put it on the score of a mistake."

"I speak! madam, do you want to have me shot?"

"No, no, it's useless. Her nephew is an attorney. 'Do men gather grapes?' as Mr. Heavyside says."

"Damn Heavyside!" exclaimed the peer, "I must go see about some wine;" and he left the room.

The old lady recommenced with a groan—"What a memory Mrs. P—— had! she would remember cards through a rubber, and never omitted marking in her life. *She took the general's box;* she had always a fancy for knick-knackeries, and wore ornaments very unsuitable to her years—forgetting the lilies of the valley. I wish Miss Clarke was here, a worthy comely young woman, colonel, recommended to me as a spiritual assistant by Mr. Wagstaff of the Bethesda. My nephew can't bear her because she was bred a dressmaker, and a vile dragoon officer told him some nasty story to her disadvantage. Oh, colonel, I wish George was awakened—you go to church regularly?"

"I cannot assert that I do *regularly;* not that I see any harm in it."

"Very prettily remarked, colonel; and you often, no doubt, reflect upon the place you're going to?"

"Yes, indeed, madam; one must join one's regiment sooner or later."

"Ah, colonel, I wish George had your serious turn;

and, between ourselves, he is by no means *a safe whist player*. His game is very dangerous. Ah, if I could have had Mr. Wagstaff to meet you! but my nephew's prejudice is so violent. He is a sweet, spiritual minded young man—comes often to sit an evening with me; and he is so obliging! takes *Miss Clarke* home at midnight, to save me the expense of coach-hire, although she lives beyond the lamps. Poor Mrs. P——! I wonder who will get her card counters. They were superb. Well, *she stole the box, however;* but as the inspired psalmist, I mean penman, says—Ah, me! I have no memory; I wish *Miss Clarke* was here. Well, George, any appearance of dinner?"

"So says the butler, madam, and here he comes."

"Colonel, take down my aunt;" and thus ended Lady L——'s lamentations over *sin, snuff-boxes, and Mrs. P——*.

LETTER XXX.

The Otter-killer's Return—Craniology—Superstitions—Sea-horse—Master-otter—Anecdotes of it—Ghosts and Fairies—Their Influence upon Men and Animals—Cure of Witchcraft—Holy Lakes—Lough Keirawn—Its Butter Fishery—The Faragurta—Its Causes, Imaginary and Real—Cures and Cases—Swearing—Comparative Value upon the Book, the Vestment, and the Scull—The Clearing of Miss Currigan—An Uncatholic Cook.

THE otter-killer arrived here late last evening, after having, according to his own account, worked wonders upon the damaged head. From the specimens I have seen during my short sojourn in *Ballycroy*, I have come to a conclusion, that the sculls of the natives are fabricated of different materials to those of all the world besides. Their endurance is miraculous—a fellow who was reported as "beaten to a jelly, and anointed by the priest," last week actually cleared a fair with an unpronounceable name, yesterday, after qualifying for admission into the next infirmary, some half score of his majesty's liege subjects. This is an every-day exploit; and of all the corners of the earth that I have visited, I would name this as the place wherein to establish a resident craniologist.

Like all wild people, these aborgines are absurdly credulous, and open to the grossest superstitions. Charms, as they believe, are employed with decided success, in every disease you name. The existence of ghosts and fairies is universally acknowledged; and animals of extraordinary formation and strange virtues are supposed to inhabit lakes and rivers. Among these the *sea-horse* and *master-otter** are pre-eminent. By a singular anomaly, the first is said to be found in certain inland loughs, and his appearance is imagined to be fatal to the unfortunate person who encounters him. The latter, however, should be an object of anxious research, for he is endued

* Appendix, No. V.

with amazing virtues. Where a portion of his skin is, the house cannot be burned, or the ship cast away, and steel or bullet will not harm the man who possesses an inch of this precious material. Antony, indeed, confesses, that in the course of his otter-hunting, he has never been fortunate enough to meet this invaluable brute; but he tells a confused story of one having been killed "far down in the north," by three brothers called Montgomery, who, from poverty, became immensely rich, and whose descendants are opulent to this very day. He says, the master-otter was seen twice in this neighbourhood. At Dhu-hill, he appeared about sixty years ago, attended by about one hundred common sized animals, who waited upon the 'master' like loyal and dutiful beasts. He was also observed by one of the O'Donnel family, while passing through Clew Bay in a sailing-boat. Requiring a supply of fresh water, O'Donnel landed on an island for the purpose of filling his keg, but found the spring already occupied by a strange and nondescript animal. After his first surprise had subsided, he returned to the boat, and procured a gun. This he loaded carefully with five fingers and a half*—for Antony is minute in all his narratives—and then, and within a dozen yards, levelled at *the master*. Thrice he drew the trigger, and thrice the gun missed fire. The otter wisely determined not to give him a fourth chance, and left the well for the ocean. Mortified at his failure, O'Donnel tried his gun at a passing gull; it exploded without trouble, and finished the unfortunate bird—thus proving beyond a doubt that the gun was faultless, and the preservative qualities of the animal were alone to blame—"and indeed," quoth Antony, "he might have snapped at *the master* to eternity; for if an inch of skin can save house, ship, and man, what a deal of virtue there must be in the whole hide!"

The legendary tales touching the appearance of ghosts, and the exploits of fairies, are endless. The agency of the former appears directed principally to man, while

* The lower class of Irish describe the charge of a gun, not by quantity of powder and shot, but by *long measure*.

the latter exercise their powers upon children and cattle. Indeed, the sinister influence of "the fairy race" appears to fall almost exclusively upon the brute creation in Ballycroy; and through it, many an unhappy cow comes to an untimely end, and if she escape loss of life, she suffers what is nearly as bad, loss of butter.* For the *first* calamity, Antony acknowledges there is no cure; but for the *second*, there *is* "balm in Gilead," and certain holy loughs afford an antidote to this elfin visitation.

The cow, I believe, should be present at the operation, which is preformed by committing her tether and some butter to the waves, with (of course) a due proportion of prayers for her recovery. Whether the animal be benefited or not, there be others who reap sure and solid advantages. At the proper period, some saint's day, no doubt, when Lough Keirawn is frequented by the proprietors of bewitched cattle, many of the poor of the neighbourhood congregrate on the lee side of the lake, and a lively and profitable fishing of fresh butter continues, until the oblations to the saint or saintess of the lake, on the part of the afflicted cows, have ended.

Among the human diseases ascribed to supernatural causes, the *faragurta* is the principal. Conjectures touching its origin are numerous and contradictory, and it is attributed to every thing but the true cause. The *faragurta* comes on suddenly—a general weakness precedes the attack—the sufferer's strength is prostrated in an instant—he sinks down, and if assistance be not at hand, perishes. Many persons are lost through this disease, while crossing the extensive wilds around us, where human relief is generally unattainable.

The causes to which in popular belief it is ascribed are many. Some assert that it is brought on by treading upon a poisonous plant; others, that it is occasioned by fairy influence; while more affirm that it is produced by passing over the place where a corpse has been laid down. But this mystified disorder is, after all, nothing but exhaustion consequent upon hunger and fatigue.

* Appendix, No. VI.

The lower classes are particularly obnoxious to its attack. They eat but seldom, and at irregular seasons; and commonly labour for many hours before they break their fast. Want of food produces faintness and exhaustion; and a supernatural cause is sought for a simple malady, which is only the natural consequence of dyspepsia and an empty stomach.

One would imagine that the specific for *faragurta* would at once point out its origin. Bread, or even a few grains of corn, are believed to cure it instantly; but any kind of food is equally efficacious. "I have seen," said my kinsman, "many persons attacked with *faragurta*, and have myself been patient and physician. Some years ago, a fine active boy, called *Emineein*,* commonly attended me to the moors, and one day he was suddenly taken ill, in the very wildest part of the hills. He lost all power of limb, and lay down upon the heath unable to proceed a step. We had no grain of any kind to administer, and in his emergency tried that universal panacea—a glass of whiskey. After he had swallowed the cordial, the boy rather got worse than better, and we were obliged to carry him to a still-house, at nearly two miles' distance. On our arrival, fortunately for *Emineein*, we found the operators collected round a *skibb*† of potatoes. After eating one or two, the patient was able to join the party, and next morning proceeded stoutly home.

"In my own case, the predisposing cause was no enigma. I had been one of a knot of fox-hunters, who, on the preceding night, had indulged in a desperate jollification. Finding a disinclination for breakfast, I repaired, contrary to my general habit, without it to the mountains. I had exercised severely for several hours, when at once I became helpless as an infant, and sank upon a bank incapable of motion. My pony and some food were speedily obtained, and the *faragurta* banished. But assuredly, if unassisted, I must have lain upon the heath, for I could not make the slightest exertion to get forward." * * * *

* Synonymous to *Neddy*. † A basket.

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It is a lamentable fact, that the obligation of a legal oath is *here* of trifling importance. Cases of determined perjury occur every day; and an adjuration upon the evangelists is considered as being far inferior in solemnity to one upon the *priest's vestment.* Whether there be any regular formula to be observed in this comparative swearing, I know not—I say *comparative,* for in Ballycroy, oaths, like adjectives, have three degrees of value. First, that upon the evangelists; the second, upon the vestment; and the last, upon the *scull.* Nothing is more common than to hear a fellow, who has just laid down the book, offer to fortify his doubtful evidence by taking *number two.* But even the *vestment* is not always conclusive; and the following anecdote will best describe the value of comparative swearing.

Andy Bawn has felt the arrow of "the villain archer," and believed, "fond wretch!" that he was beloved again. The night of the portmanteau affair will be ever chronicled upon his memory; for while he was under fear and terror at the bridge of Ballyveeney, she, the lady of his love, was at a *prinkum** at Latrah, performing "apples for gentlemen"† with another suitor. Nay, more, the quondam lover, as was reported, had actually *cecis-beo'd* Miss Biddy Currigan across the bogs; and dark and dangerous innuendoes arose from this imprudent escort. Andy Bawn was unhappily a man "who doubts, but doats; suspects, yet fondly loves." Alas! whatwas to be done? Could Miss Currigan become Mrs Donahoo, after suffering a *regular blast,* as they call it, in the kingdom of Connaught? Impossible! her character must be cleared, and Andy satisfied.

The magistrate was proposed—well, that was good enough, if it were the identity of a strayed sheep, or the murder of a man; but in a nice case like Miss Currigan's, it was totally inefficient. "The vestment would be taken,"—still better; but the world was censorious: and after all, Biddy Currigan was a giddy girl to cross a

* A Ballycroy ball, on the "free and easy plan," where much whiskey, and no ceremony, is used.

† A favourite '*contre dance*' at the above assemblies.

couple of miles of moorland, after midnight, with a declared lover, and him *hearty*;*—and so thought Andy Bawn. At last the suspected virgin volunteered "to take the scull," dispel the fears of her liege lord, and put calumny to the blush for ever. Andy Bawn "breathed again;" and the otter-killer was directed to provide the necessary articles for the ceremony.

A scull was accordingly procured from a neighbouring burying-ground; and Andy's mother, anxious for the honour of the family, threw into the relict a bunch of keys—for iron, they say, adds desperately to the solemnity of the obligation. The apparatus being paraded, Antony explained, in the mother tongue, that the sins of the lady or gentleman to whom the scull had once appertained, would be added to Miss Currigan's, if she, Biddy, swore falsely; and Mrs. Donahoo jingled the old iron, and showed that she was "awake to time," and had left nothing on her part undone that could give effect to the ceremonial. Miss Currigan, with a step and bearing which might silence slander, advanced under the direction of the otter-killer:—like "a maid in the pride of her purity," she devoutly placed her hand upon the scull—and Andy Bawn was made a happy man for ever!

That the saints are often and scandalously overreached by sinners, is a fact which must be admitted and lamented. One case of base dishonesty has but recently occurred in the establishment of my cousin. A cook, whom he had procured through the agency of a friend, has proved a heavy defaulter, and, as Antony says, "scandalized the family." For a considerable time her conduct was unquestionable: she went regularly to mass, gave half-a-crown at Easter, never missed confessions, and better still, conducted the culinary department with excellent propriety,—so much so, that Father Andrew declared from the altar that she was an exemplary *artiste*, and a capital Christian. "Frailty, thy name is woman!"—this paragon of cooks levanted one frosty night with a travelling pedler! Then, and not till then, was the dark side of her character exhibited. "She did

* Anglice, *half drunk*.

not value *Lent a traneein*—had *shared a rasher* with Sir Charles's man upon a blessed Friday—and, if a skillet went astray, she would promise a pilgrimage to *the Reek* for its recovery, without the least intention of ever laying a leg upon that blessed hill."

The morning after her disappearance, her sins were freely canvassed in the kitchen: "The Lord forgive her!" said the keeper, "for I can't; she treated the young dogs abominably—*Spot* will lose a claw; and I am sure it was Sibby, the devil speed her! that scalded him."

"She could hide a quart of spirits, and it would never show upon her," cried Pattigo.

"She was mighty dangerous in a house," exclaimed the black-eyed chambermaid; "I never settled the master's room but she was sure to pass the window."

"She's gone," said the otter-killer; "there's worse in the north than Sibby. Many a good bowl of broth she gave me. *Tho she mur tho she; agus neil she gun lought.** She was no *great Catholic* it is true; for she owned to me last Saint John's—and she *hearty* at the time—that she was in debt *four stations at Ball, and three and twenty at Croagh Patrick!* She was, the crature, a fine warrant for a promise, but the worst performer under the canopy of heaven—She'll never," said the old man, with his own peculiar chuckle, "clear scores with the Reek and Father Nolan. In troth, I think it would almost puzzle *Bobby!*"†

* *Anglice*, "She is as she is; but she's not without her fault."

† This extraordinary being lived at the foot of Croagh Patrick, and was the first performer (religious) of his day, in Connaught. He generally resided at the house of a neighbouring gentleman; and when a pilgrim visiter was discovered by the acclivity of the hill, or the quantity of prayers to be got over, Bobby, *for a consideration*, undertook and executed the task. He was not only a harmless, but, as may be well imagined, a very useful personage; and his death has left a blank which has never yet been filled.

The remains of poor Bobby, at his own request, were transported to the summit of the mountain, and deposited on the apex of Croagh Patrick, where he had so often and so usefully performed. As his was laid were no other body rested, the line intended for Sir John Moore would be probably more applicable to the hermit;

"They left him *alone* with his glory.'

LETTER XXXI.

Fresh Arrivals—The Priest's Reception—The Lodge alarmed—Preparations for Deer-stalking — State of the Garrison — The Mountain Lake—The Peasant's Adventure—Carrig-a-binniogh—The Ascent—Prospect from the Summit—The Ravine and Red-deer—A Highland Ambuscade—The Catastrophe.

If a man were obliged to chronicle with brevity, the leading events of our *terra incognita*, I would advise him to reduce them to "arrivals and departures." As the door is never locked, the stream of visiters is incessant. Every man coming from "the corners of the earth" drops in with a "God save all here!" This is the *Shibboleth* of Ballycroy; the accredited letter of introduction, and, better for the traveller still, a full acquittance for meat, drink, and lodging.

This morning we have had an alliterative arrival—a piper, a pedlar, and a priest. Although I place them according to their order of approach, I need scarcely say that the last, our respected friend, has given unexpected pleasure. For me, the visit is delightful, for I hope to obtain another lesson in the "gentle art." The colonel has embraced this "Walton of the wilderness;" a man on whom four bottles would not show, and to whom, in woodcraft and theology, in the commander's opinion, the clerk of Copmanhurst himself was little better than a bungler; and, notwithstanding my kinsman's delinquency in intercepting the despatches, and abstracting the enclosure, he has escaped with a tap or two upon the cheek; for, as Antony declares, "Father Andrew dotes upon *the master*."

But a shepherd in breathless haste has rushed into the cabin. By expressive signs, and few words, he has conveyed the intelligence to Mr. Hennessey, that three outlying deer are at this minute in a neighbouring glen. He saw them in the valley as he crossed the brow above. Nothing short of the landing of a French army, or a

smuggler, could occasion such confusion. The chamber of state is invaded, rifles are uncased, shot exchanged for bullets, a basket with refreshments packed ; all is hurry and preparation, and in an incalculably short time, we are ready for the fray, and in full march for the mountains. Shakspeare, or he is belied, was in youth a deer fancier, and he would probably describe this busy scene by " loud alarum, *exeunt omnes.*"

The day is particularly favourable, the sun shines brilliantly, the sky is without a cloud, and if we even miss the deer, I trust that the prospect from the mountain top will more than repay our labour in ascending it. The party comprises three guns, and some ten or twelve drivers, with our guide. My kinsman and Hennessey have rifles ; I am no marksman with a bullet, and I declined to take one, and therefore must put my trust in honest John Manton. We bend our course directly to the mountain clough, where the deer were seen by the peasant ; but when we reach the base of the hills, we must diverge to the left, and make a considerable *detour*, and judging from the appearance of the heights to be surmounted, we have work cut out which, before our return to the hut, will tell what metal we are made of.

Nor is the garrison during our absence left without protectors. The colonel, the priest, the otter-killer, and old John, *there* keep watch and ward. The former twain appear to have sworn eternal friendship over a three-legged table, and are settled *tête-à-tête* at either side of the cabin window, with all the requisites for fabricating flies, displayed before them. Antony is greasing his otter-trap beside the fire. He still indulges the vain hope that his rheumatism may be cured, and that he will once more revisit the remoter loughs, where otters are abundant, and where many of his happier days were ' lang syne' spent. Poor fellow, his hunting is ended, and his trap, like a warrior's sword, must be laid aside, for age has come heavily upon its master. Old John, " the last and trustiest of the four," has assumed his culinary apron, and from the strength and array of his '*materiel*,' it is clear, that he calculates little upon the red-deer venison we shall bring home.

A smart walk of some three miles over an undulating surface, of gentle but regular ascent, brought us to the deep and circular lake which lies at the base of Carrig-a-binniogh: it seems the boundary between the hill country and the moorlands. Here we halted, and held with the peasants a council of war, on the course of operations to be pursued.

The situation of this mountain lough is extremely picturesque; on three sides it is embosomed in the hills, which rise boldly from the water's edge, and for many hundred feet appear to be almost perpendicular. Its depth is considerable, and hence, bright as the day is, the waters have a dark and sombre look. It abounds with trout of moderate size and excellent flavour. They were rising fast at the natural fly, and appeared generally to be herring-sized.

While resting here, preparatory to attempting to ascend the heights, Cooney, the guide, related a very apposite adventure.

Late in the autumn of the preceding year, the peasant had visited the lake with his fishing-rod. The trouts took well, and Cooney had nearly filled his basket, when he was startled by the report of a gun, at no great distance up the hill. While he looked in the direction from whence the shot appeared to have been discharged, a fine full-grown stag crossed the brow above him, tottered downwards for some twenty steps, and then falling into a steep and stony ravine, rolled lifelessly over, until he reached the very spot where the astonished fisherman was standing. Before his surprise had time to abate, a man armed with a French gun* leaped upon the bank over which the deer had fallen, and was joined immediately by a companion, armed also with a fowling-piece. Then, for the first time, they observed the startled angler. The discovery was any thing but agreeable; for, after a momentary pause, they rushed down the hill together, and presenting their long guns at Cooney's breast, ordered him to decamp in terms that admitted of no demur. The angler absconded forth-

* Appendix, No. VII

with; for, as he reasoned fairly enough, "a man who could drive an ounce of lead through a stag's scull, would find little trouble in drilling a Christian." On looking round, he saw the deer-stealers place the carcass on their shoulders, and ascend the heights, over which they quickly disappeared. The feat is almost incredible, and it required an amazing effort of strength and determination to transport a full-grown red-deer over a precipitous mountain, which we, in light marching order, and with no burden but our guns, found a difficult task enough to climb.

From its very base, Carrig-a-binniogh presents a different surface to the moorlands which environ it: heath is no more seen, and in its place the mountain's rugged sides are clothed with lichen and wild grasses. The face of the hill is broken and irregular, and the ascent rendered extremely disagreeable by multitudes of loose stones, which, being lightly bedded in the soil, yield to the pressure of the traveller's foot, and of course increase his difficulties.

After the first hundred yards had been gallantly surmounted, we halted by general consent to recover breath. Again we resumed our labour, and, with occasional pauses, plodded on "our weary way." As we ascended, the hill became more precipitous, the grass shorter, and the hands were as much employed as the feet. The halts were now more frequent; and each progression towards the summit shorter after every pause. "To climb the trackless mountain all unseen," is very poetical, no doubt; but it is also, I regret to add, amazingly fatiguing, and a task for men of thews and sinews of no ordinary strength. But we were determined, and persevered—"*en avant*" was the order of the day: on we progressed, slowly but continuously; the steepest face of the hill was gradually overcome, and a wide waste of moss and shingle lay before us, rising towards a cairn of stones which marks the apex of the mountain. We pressed on with additional energy; the termination of our toil was in view: in a few minutes we gained the top, and a scene, glorious beyond imagination, burst upon

us at once, and repaid tenfold the labour we had encountered to obtain it.

We stood on the very pinnacle of the ridge, two thousand feet above the level of the sea. Clew Bay, that magnificent sheet of water, was extended at our feet, studded with its countless islands: inland, the eye ranged over a space of fifty miles; and towns and villages beyond number were sprinkled over a surface covered with grass, and corn, and heath, in beautiful alternation. The sun was shining gloriously, and the variety of colouring presented by this expansive landscape, was splendidly tinted by the vertical rays of light. The yellow corn, the green pasturage, the russet heaths, were traceable to an infinite distance, while smaller objects were marked upon this natural panorama, and churches, towns, and mansions occasionally relieved the prospect. We turned from the interior to the west; there the dark waters of the Atlantic extended, till the eye lost them in the horizon. Northward, lay the Sligo Highlands;—and southward, the Connemara Mountains, with the noble islands of Turk and Boffin—nearer objects seemed almost beneath us: Achill was below—Clare Island stretched at our feet—while our own cabin looked like a speck upon the canvass, distinguished only by its spiral wreath of smoke from the hillocks that encircled it. There was an indescribable loneliness around, that gave a powerful effect to all we saw. The dreariness of the waste we occupied was grand and imposing: we were far removed from every thing human; we stood above the world, and could exclaim with Byron, "This, *this* is solitude!"

How long we might have gazed on this brilliant spectacle, is questionable. Hennessey, less romantic than we, reminded us that it was time to occupy the defile, by which the deer, if found, and driven from the lowlands, would pass within our range. Thus recalled, we looked at the immediate vicinage of the cairn. It was a wilderness of moss, and bog, and granite, barren beyond description, and connected with the upper levels of the Alpine ridge, which extended for miles at either side, by a narrow chain of rock, which seemed more like the topping of a parapet than the apex of a line of hills. In-

deed, a more desolate region could not be well imagined; —no sign of vegetation, if scathed lichen, and parched and withered flag-grass be excepted—the mountain cattle were rarely seen upon these heights, and the footmarks upon the softer surface were those of deer and goats. Hennessey discovered the tracks of a herd of the larger species, which, from his acute observations, had evidently crossed the ridge since sunrise, and must, from their numerous traces, have amounted to at least a dozen.

While we still cast a "longing, lingering look" at a scene which, I lament to say, I shall most probably never be permitted to view again—a boy rose from the valley towards the south, and hastened at full speed to join us. His communication was soon made, and, like the shepherds at the cabin, pantomine rather than speech conveyed its import. His tidings were momentous: the deer had moved from the place in which they had been first discovered, and were now within one thousand yards of the place where we were resting. Hennessey and the *gossoon** advanced in double quick, and where the ridge is steepest between the highlands and the valley, we observed them make a sudden halt, and creep gingerly forward, to what seemed the brow of a precipice. We followed more leisurely, and adopting a similar method of approach, stole silently on, and looked over the chasm.

The precipice we were on forms the extremity of a long but narrow ravine, which, gradually rising from the lowlands, divides the bases of Carrig-a-binniogh and Meelroe. It was a perpendicular rock of fearful height. At either side the valley was flanked by the sides of the opposite hills; and they sprang up so rugged and precipitous as to be quite impracticable to all but "the wild flock which never needs a fold;" and yet the cleugh below was like a green spot upon a wilderness. To the very bases of the ridges it was covered with verdant grass and blooming heather, while, at the upper end, streams from several well-heads united together and

* Anglice—*a boy*.

formed a sparkling rivulet, which wandered between banks so green and shrubby, as formed a striking contrast to the barren heaths below and the blasted wilderness above.

We put our hats aside, and peeped over. The wave of Hennessey's hand proved the boy's report to be correct, and we were gratified with a sight of those rare and beautiful animals which formed the objects of our expedition. They were the same leash which the peasant had noticed in the lower valley—an old stag, a younger one, and a doe.

The great elevation of the precipice, and the caution with which we approached the verge, permitted us, without alarming them, to view the red-deer leisurely. They appeared to have been as yet undisturbed, for, after cropping the herbage for a little, the younger stag and the hind lay down, while the old hart remained erect, as if he intended to be their sentinel.

The distance of the deer from the ridge was too great to allow the rifle to be used with any thing like certainty; and from the exposed nature of the hills at either side, it was impossible to get within point-blank range undiscovered. Hennessey had already formed his plans, and drawing cautiously back from the ridge, he pulled us by the skirts, and beckoned us to retire.

We fell back about a pistol-shot from the cliff, and under a rock, which bore the portentous name of Craignamonia,* held our council of war.

There were two passes, through one of which the deer, when roused and driven from the glen, would most likely retreat. The better of these, as post of honour, was, more politely than prudently, intrusted to me—my kinsman occupied the other; and Hennessey having ensconced us behind rocks which prevented our ambush from being discovered, crossed to the other side of the ridge, and I lost sight of him. Meanwhile the boy had been despatched to apprize the *drivers* that the deer were in the ravine, and to notify the spot where we were posted, to enable them to arrange their movements according to our plans.

* Anglice—*The rock of slaughter.*

I will not pretend to describe the anxious, nay, *agonizing* hour that I passed in this highland ambuscade. The deep stillness of the waste was not broken by even the twittering of a bird. From the place where I lay concealed, I commanded a view of the defile for the distance of some eighty yards, and my eye turned to the path by which I expected the deer to approach, until to gaze longer pained me. My ear was equally engaged; the smallest noise was instantly detected, and the ticking of my watch appeared sharper and louder than usual. As time wore on, my nervousness increased. Suddenly a few pebbles fell—my heart beat faster—but it was a false alarm. Again I heard a faint sound, as if a light foot pressed upon loose shingle—it was repeated—By Saint Hubert, it is the deer! They have entered the gorge of the pass, and approach the rock that covers me, in a gentle canter!

To sink upon one knee and cock both barrels was a moment's work. Reckless of danger, the noble animals, in a single file, galloped down the narrow pathway. The hart led the way, followed by the doe, and the old stag brought up the rear. As they passed me at the short distance of twenty paces, I fired at the leader, and, as I thought, with deadly aim; but the ball passed over his back, and splintered the rock beyond him. The report rang over the waste, and the deer's surprise was evinced by the tremendous rush they made to clear the defile before them. I selected the stag for my second essay; eye and finger kept excellent time, as I imagined—I drew the trigger—a miss, by every thing unfortunate! The bullet merely struck a tine from his antler, and, excepting this trifling graze, he went off at a thundering pace, uninjured.

Cursing myself, John Manton, and all the world, I threw my luckless gun upon the ground and rushed to the summit of a neighbouring rock, from which the heights and valleys beyond the gorge of the pass were seen distinctly. The deer had separated—the hart and doe turned suddenly to the right, and were fired at by my cousin without effect. The stag went right ahead; and while I still gazed after him, a flash issued from a hollow in the

hill, the sharp report of Hennessey's piece succeeded, and the stag sprang full six feet from the ground, and tumbling over and over repeatedly, dropped upon the bent-grass with a rifle bullet in his heart.

I rushed at headlong speed to the spot where the noble animal lay. The eye was open—the nostril expanded just as life had left him. Throwing his rifle down, Hennessey pulled out a clasp-knife, passed the blade across the deer's throat, and requesting my assistance, raised the carcass by the haunches in order to assist its bleeding freely.

Having performed this necessary operation, and obtained the assistance of two of our companions from the valley, whence they had been driving the deer, we proceeded to transport the dead stag to the lowlands. It was no easy task, but we accomplished it quickly; and perceiving some horses grazing at no great distance, we determined to press one for the occasion. A stout pony was most unceremoniously put in requisition, the deer laid across his back, and after emptying flask and basket joyously beside a stream of rock-water, we turned our faces to the cabin, where the news of our success had already arrived.

LETTER XXXII.

Deer brought home—Dinner—Gastronomic Reflections—Grouse Soup—Roasted Salmon—Cooking *pour et contre*—Carouse commences—Symptoms of Inebriety—Night in the Hills—Coffee *al fresco*—Temperance Society—A Bacchanalian Group—Auld lang syne—Borrowing a Congregation—The Company dispersed.

WONDERFUL are the inventions of man! The slaughter of an unhappy stag has been made good and sufficient cause for all the idlers of the community assembling at our cabin. They are squatted round the fire like Indians in a wigwam—and old John, no bad authority in such matters, declares in a stage whisper to his master, "that a four-gallon cag will scarcely last the night, there is such a clanjamfry of *coosherers** in the kitchen—the devil speed them, one and all!"

It was twilight when we got home. The deer had arrived before us, and was already hanging up, suspended from the *couples*. A cheerful fire blazed in the room of state, while an exhilarating effluvia from the outer chamber told that John's preparations were far advanced. We had scarcely time to make our hurried toilet, before the table was covered, and Father Andrew, at the colonel's especial solicitation, favoured us with a *Latin* grace.

No one merits and relishes a good dinner better than a grouse-shooter. It delights me to see my companion eat like a traveller; and to please me, he should possess sufficient *acumen* to enable him to appreciate the fare. I despise the man who is cursed with a Spartan palate, and who hardly knows the difference between beef and mutton; and yet, in equal ratio, the *gourmand* is my abomination. There is a limit in culinary lore beyond which, as I opine, the sportsman should never travel. Like a soldier, he will sometimes find it serviceable to be able to direct the broiling of a steak and the combination of a

* Appendix, No. VIII.

stew. To fabricate a curry, or even regulate a hash, may be tolerated; and in a wild country like Ballycroy, or the Scottish highlands, this knowledge will frequently be "worth a Jew's eye;" but every thing beyond this in kitchen accomplishments is detestable. With one who composed omelets, and talked scholarly of the *materiel* of a plum-pudding—and I once had the misfortune to fall into a shooting-party afflicted with such a personage—I would consort no more upon the heath, than I would shoot with a cook, or draw a cover with a confectioner. And yet, with these antipathies, I recommend the neophyte to make himself in every thing as independent as he can. A few practical lessons are worth a world of precept: one week's cooking in the moors will render him for life an adept; and if gun and angle fail him not, he will be able to command a dinner, without owing to the devil the compliment of a bad cook.

Did I wish to elucidate my opinions, I would stake them upon two items in our bill of fare. The soldier compounded the soup—and such soup!—and yet it was the simple extract of a mountain hare and five broken birds, which had been too much injured to permit their being sent away. Shade of Kitchener! one spoonful of that exquisite *potage* would have made thee abandon half thy theories and throw thy "cunningest devices" to the winds!

The priest superintended the fish—an eight pound salmon, crimped, split, subdivided, aud roasted upon bog-deal skewers, before a clear turf fire.* All the sauces that Lazenby ever fabricated, could not produce that soup or emulate this broil. Let him, whose jaded palate a club-house cook cannot accommodate, try the *cuisinerie* of our cabin. He shall walk to the mountain lake, and on his return the colonel will compose a soup, and the priest supply a salmon: if eating like a ploughman be to him a pleasure,—

> "If *these* won't make him,
> The Devil take him!"

But lest my theories be mistaken, I must say that I

* Appendix, No. IX.

hold cooking and "creature comforts" as very secondary indeed to sport. If both can be had, so much the better; and when I recommend the tyro to learn the art and mysteries of the broiling iron, it is precisely on that principle that the knowledge how to cook a dinner may, at times, be as necessary for him, as to know how to wash a gun. No man, I presume, will do either, who can manage to have them done by deputy. But a sportsman, a keen straight-forward sportsman, will of necessity be often left dependant upon his own resources, and hence he should be prepared for the contingency. It is the abuse I cry out against. A man who on the mountains counts the minutes until dinner-hour shall come, who is seeking an appetite rather than amusement, and instead of game, is dreaming of *gourmanderie*—him I totally reject, and implore to lay aside his gun for ever, and exchange the powder-flask for the pepper-box. The latter he will find more useful, and not half so dangerous.

It was clear from the very start that this was to be among the *wettest nights* of the season. The colonel settled himself for a comfortable carouse, the priest was not the man to desert his *buon camarado*, and Antony declared that there was good cause for a general jollification, as he properly observed that "it was not every day that Manus kills a bullock," by which old saw, I presume, the defunct deer and ourselves are typified. No wonder then that the revel commenced with all the members of the body politic; and while the contents of the "four gallon cag" were invaded in the kitchen, the wine circulated rapidly in the chamber of state. In truth, during my short but checkered life, civil and military, I never saw a party evince an honester disposition *to drink fair*. No coquetry about filling; no remonstrances touching "heel-taps" and "sky-lights;" round went the bottle, until the juice of the grape appeared too cold a fluid for such mercurial souls, and a general call for a more potent liquid was given and obeyed.

Now came "the sweet hour i' the night," and old care might, if he pleased, have "hanged himself in his own garters." The priest, whose voice must once have been remarkably fine, and who certainly never impaired it

much by "hallooing psalms," sang national melodies, or joined the colonel and my cousin in glees and catches, which, as Wamba says, were "not ill sung." "Fast and furious" the mirth proceeded, while "every pause between," clouds of tobacco rose like a mist-wreath, and overspread the company with a canopy of vapour.

For my own part every prudential resolution vanished with the first catch; and it was not till a certain unsteadiness of vision discovered that I had reached that felicitous state, when no twelve honest men upon oath would certify my sobriety, that I mustered courage to retreat. I felt that, had I remained much longer, I was likely to become *hors de combat;* and lighting a cigar, left the cabin to breathe the fresh air, which long since had been superseded in the banqueting-room by an atmosphere of genuine *cannastre.*

It was a mild, calm, dark night, and such a one feels delicious in the hills. Two or three solitary stars were feebly twinkling in the sky, though, were the truth told, probably there was but *one.* I took the pathway leading to the river, and sat down upon the banks to "blow my cloud" in solitude. I was not, however, permitted to muse alone; my kinsman immediately joined me, and settling himself upon one of the masses of turf, which the flood tears from the banks of the stream, and leaves when their violence subsides upon the verge of the river, replenished his *meerschaum.*

"How refreshing," he said, "to exchange that mephitic air within, for this mild but bracing night-breeze! I saw you passed the glass, and I desired John to bring us out some coffee. It is a queer place, too, for a Mocha fancier to indulge in; but this is the charm that binds me to the mountains. In life, locality is every thing; it is not the *what* one does, it is the *where.* Venison at a city feast is an every-day concern; and the best haunch in England would not have the *gusto* of the red-deer's that hangs from the roof within. Common comfort in a wilderness like this, from the barrenness of all around receives a zest, which nothing in civilized society can realize, and '*voilà l'exemple.*'"

Lighted by a peasant with a bog-deal torch, that emitted more light than forty candles together, the old man approached us with his tray. Coffee taken in the open air, in "darkness palpable," into which the powerful blaze of the torch which our bare-legged attendant held could but feebly penetrate, associated with the place and company, made an impression upon my fancy that will not be easily obliterated.

"Next to modern fanaticism, nothing stirs my choler more," said my kinsman, "than that silly bubble, yclept the *Temperance Society*. To prevent men from occasionally indulging, no matter what their grade in life may be, is perfectly Utopian. The more you inhibit what the world calls pleasure, the more you urge mankind to the pursuit. Hence, in water-drinking, as in religion, there is the grossest hypocrisy practised; and I would as soon trust a denouncer of wine with the key of my cellar, as allow my cat to have the *entrée* of the dairy. Then upon the score that health and longevity are interrupted by even a moderate attachment to the bottle,* I deny the position altogether, and for my proof I would point out the group within. The otter-killer says that he is eighty—we at the lodge, from certain data, know him to be at least five years more,—his life has been one of much severity, with constant exposure to heat and cold, and he has, as he admits, been always a free drinker. The colonel, for thirty years, has been attached to the most dissipated regiments in the service, and excepting that he suffered from gout, which is hereditary in his family, and rheumatism occasioned by a neglected wound, where is there a more vigorous sexagenarian? But the priest is probably the best example of them all. Exposed to all the annoyances of his profession, brought constantly within sphere of contagion, called out of bed at midnight, and obliged to brave weather, when, as it has been happily expressed, a man would not reject an enemy's dog, he exercises hospitality freely, and is there a panado-maker among the whole water-drinking gang who could '*rough it*' with him for a fortnight? But, hark! he pitches

* Appendix, No X.

that manly and melodious voice—he strikes up poor Burns's inimitable lyric, '*Then are we met.*' That matchless song was surely written for such a voice and such a company!"

Under cover of the priest's melody we approached the window. There sat a party who might well put the Temperance Society to blush. For their years, I suspect there was not a healthier, and I will swear not a happier, trio in the king's dominion. It was just the scene the Flemish artist would select to employ his pencil on. For effect, the light was excellent: the candles having been removed to the extremity of the apartment, the bacchanalian group were revealed hy the red and mellow blaze of a brilliant wood-fire. Separated by a table provided with every requisite for a deep carouse, sat the soldier and the churchman. The back of the latter was turned to the window, but his amplitude of shoulder and bull-neck at once bespoke the strength for which he was remarkable, while the partial baldness of his head told that he had passed life's meridian. The tall and martial figure opposite contrasted well with the churchman's. Older by some half-score years, he might, like Jack Falstaff, be "some fifty, ay, or, by the mass, threescore!" but his age was green; and notwithstanding the wear and tear that a military life and its occasional excesses had caused, his cheerful countenance and merry eye showed that he loved yet to hear "the chimes at midnight." The otter-killer completed the group; sitting on a low stool, from time to time he regulated and supplied the wood-fire; his silver hair collected in a long cue, seal-skin pouch, singular dress, and venerable air, made him the most striking figure of the party. A little terrier bitch, who never left her master, lay at the old man's feet, while an indulged black setter luxuriated before the blaze, with his intelligent head and pendulous silky ears rested on the colonel's knee.

"Is not that indeed a picture?" whispered my cousin. "What heads they have! John placed yonder bottle before them as I went out, and two parts of it are gone already. But, hush! let us hear the conversation. I think if there be strength in poteen, the colonel has reached the moralizing point."

"Andrew," said the commander. ("The colonel," said my kinsman, aside, "is generally *hard screwed* when he calls the priest Andrew.")

"Andrew, fill the glass: the boys are ruminating beside the river; their young blood is hotter than ours, so we'll stick to the *ingleside* and the tumbler. There was a day when we could bring a stag to the ground and scramble up Carrig-a-binniogh as stoutly as the best of them,—but that day's gone: we have changed for the worse, and so has every thing. Andrew, in our youth it was a merry world. But who succeeded old Markham? He was as honest a divine as ever finished a *magnum*. They talked—for virtue has always its enemies—of his smuggling a little, and having a private still in the stable,—but it was all hospitality. Andrew, the poteen is sweet, but weak—help it, man, for these glasses scarcely hold a thimbleful!—at our age water-drinking won't do. Not a drop of brandy, you say, inside the Mullet?"*

"Not an anker in the barony!" returned his companion, with a heavy sigh. "There was a time when my poor cabin could not be taken short for Nantz and Hollands; but if I can keep a bottle of *the native* now, it is the most. Would you believe it, colonel? the *revenue people* searched my house a month ago."

The colonel looked indignant. "Search your house? profane a priest's own dwelling? why, after a while, they'll look into the lodge. Did you curse the scoundrels from the altar?"

"Not I," said the churchman. "They are all northmen† and foreigners, who would not care a brass button whether I banned or blessed them for a twelvemonth. There is a ruffian of the flock‡ that acts as a spy and guide, and I suspect he sent them."

"Excommunicate him!" exclaimed the commander, with drunken solemnity.

"I did that last Candlemas. He brought a girl out of

* Appendix, No. XI.

† Appendix, No. XII.

‡ The flock—a Roman Catholic congregation is so termed in Connaught.

Achill, on *book oath*, and he with three decent wives in the parish already. I quenched the candles on him, and then he took to the revenue—*Nemo repente fuit turpissimus.*"

"And how do you and the new minister get on?"

"Poorly enough," answered the priest. "This reformation work has put the country clean asunder."

"No good will come of it," said the colonel. "I mind the time in Connaught when no man clearly knew to what religion he belonged; and in one family, the boys would go to church and the girls to mass, or, maybe, both would join and go to whichever happened to be nearest. When I entered the militia, I recollect, the first time I was ever detached from head-quarters, I went with the company to Portumna. Old Sir Mark Blake, who commanded the regiment, happened to be passing through, and the night before he had a desperate drink with General Loftus at the castle. When I left Loughrea, I forgot to ascertain where I should bring the men on Sunday, and I thought this a good opportunity to ask the question. I opened his bedroom door softly. 'Sir Mark,' says I, 'where shall I march the men?' 'What kind of day is it?' said he. 'Rather wet,' was my answer. 'It's liker the night that preceded it,' said he. 'Upon my conscience, my lad,' he continued, 'my head's not clear enough at present to recollect the exact position of church and chapel; but take them *to the nearest.*' That is what I call," and the colonel shook his head gravely, "real Christian feeling."

"Real Christian feeling," said the priest, with a groan, "is nearly banished from the world. When I went first to Castlebar, to learn Latin from Dan Donovan, my uncle Martin, God be merciful to him! was parish-priest, and Jack Benton was the minister. They agreed like sworn brothers, and no one dared say a word against either in the presence of his friend. Where the priest dined, the curate was sure to be also. They lived in true brotherhood; and when one happened to be the worst of liquor, why the other would not leave him for a bishoprick. The town was the most peaceful place in Connaught; and how could it be otherwise with such an example?

Many a night I went before them with a lantern, when they carried Carney, the lame fiddler, round the streets, to serenade the ladies. There they would walk, like humble Christians, with the cripple in the middle, and neither caring a *traneein* whether popery or protestantism was at head of the barrow. These were blessed days, colonel.—I'll thank you for the cannister,—that tobacco is excellent, and I'll try another pipeful."

"Och, hone!" exclaimed the otter-killer, "isn't it a murder to see the clergy making such fools of themselves now! When I was young, priest and minister were hand and glove. It seems to me but yesterday, when Father Patt Joyce, the Lord be good to him! lent Mr. Carson a congregation."

"Eh! what, Antony," said the colonel. "A congregation appears rather an extraordinary article to borrow."

"Faith!" said the otter-killer, "it's true. I was there myself, and I'll tell you the story. It was in the time of Bishop Beresford, that beautiful old man,—many a half-crown he gave me, for I used often to bring game and fish to the palace from the master's father. He was the handsomest gentleman I ever laid my eyes on; and, och, hone! it was he that knew how to live like a bishop. He never went a step without four long-tailed black horses to his carriage, and two mounted grooms behind him. His own body-man told me, one time I went with a haunch of red deer and a bittern* to the palace, that never less than twenty sat down in the parlour, and, in troth, there was double the number in the hall, for nobody came or went without being well taken care of.

"Well, it came into old Lord Peter's† head, that he would build a church, and settle a colony of *northmen* away in the west. Faith, he managed the one easy enough; but it failed him to do the other, for devil an inch the *northmen* would come; for, says they, 'Hell and Connaught's bad enough, but what is either to Connemara?'

* Appendix, No. XIII.

† Grandfather to the present Marquis of Sligo.

"Well, the minister came down, and a nice little man he was, one Mr. Carson. Father Patt Flyn had the parish then, and faith, in course of time, they two became as thick as inkle-weavers.

"Every thing went on beautiful, for the two clergy lived together. Father Patt Flyn minded his chapel and the flock, and Mr. Carson said prayers of a Sunday too, though sorrow a soul he had to listen to him but the clerk —But sure that was no fault of his.

"Well, I mind it as well as yesterday, for I killed that very morning two otters at Loughnamuckey, and the smallest of them was better to me than a pound note. It was late when I got down from the hills, and I went to Father Patt's as usual, and who should I meet at the door but the priest himself. 'Antony,' says he, '*ceade fealteagh*, have ye any thing with you, for the wallets seem full?' 'I have,' says I, 'your reverence;' and I pulls out two pair of graziers,* and a brace of three-pound trouts, fresh from the sea, that I caught that morning in Dhulough. In these days, I carried a ferret, besides the trap and fishing-rod, and it went hard if I missed otters, but I would net rabbits, or kill a dish of trouts. 'Upon my conscience,' says the priest, 'ye never were more welcome, Antony. The minister and myself will dine off the trouts and rabbits, for they forgot to kill a sheep for us till an hour ago; and you know, Antony, except the shoulder, there's no part of the mutton could be touched, so I was rather bothered about the dinner.'

"Well, in the evening, I was brought into the parlour, and there were their reverences as *cur cuddiogh*† as you please. Father Patt gave me a tumbler of *rael* stiff punch, and the devil a better warrant to make the same was within the province of Connaught. We were just as comfortable as we could be, when a *currier*‡ stops at the door with a letter, which he said was for Mr. Carson. Well, when the minister opens it, he got as pale as a sheet, and I thought he would have fainted. Father Patt crossed

* Young rabbits.

† Anglice—*comfortable.*

‡ Alias, *courier.*

himself. 'Arrah, Dick,' says he, 'the Lord stand between you and evil! is there any thing wrong?'—'I'm ruined,' says he; 'for some *bad member* has wrote to the bishop, and told him that I have no congregation, because you and I are so intimate, and he's coming down to-morrow with the *dane*, to see the state of things. Och, hone!' says he, 'I'm fairly ruined.'—'And is that all that's frettin' ye?' says the priest. 'Arrah, dear Dick,'—for they called each other by their *cristen* names,—'is this all? If it's a congregation ye want, ye shall have a dacent one to-morrow, and lave that to me;—and now, we'll take our drink, and not matter the bishop a fig.'

"Well, next day, sure enough, down comes the bishop, and a great retinue along with him; and there was Mr. Carson ready to receive him. 'I hear,' says the bishop, mighty stately, 'that you have no congregation.'—'In faith your holiness,' says he, 'you'll be soon able to tell that,'—and in he walks him to the church, and there were sitting threescore well-dressed men and women, and all of them as devout as if they were going to be anointed; for that blessed morning, Father Patt whipped mass over before ye had time to bless yourself, and the clanest of the flock was before the bishop in the church, and ready for his holiness. To see that all behaved properly, Father Patt had hardly put off the vestment, till he slipped on a *cota more*,* and there he sat in a back sate like any other of the congregation. I was near the bishop's reverence; he was seated in an arm-chair belonging to the priest—'Come here, Mr. Carson,' says he; 'some enemy of yours,' says the sweet old gentleman, 'wanted to injure you with me. But I am now fully satisfied.' And turning to the dane, 'By this book!' says he, 'I didn't see a claner congregation this month of Sundays!"

"*He said no such thing*," exclaimed my kinsman, who, tired with the prolixity of the otter-killer, had interrupted the finale of the tale. "How dare you, Antony, put such uncanonical and ungentlemanly language in the mouth of the *sweet old man?* Here, John, clear the

* Anglice—*a great-coat.*

kitchen. Out with the piper, and chuck the *cag* after him. We'll disperse *this congregation;* and they may dance outside if they please, while pipes and poteen stand them.—And now ventilate the cabin—open door and window—and sling our hammocks as soon as possible."

Agreeably to this mandate, the kitchen company were ejected with scanty ceremony—the colonel and the priest retired to their respective beds with wonderful steadiness—while we took possession of our markee, which, under existing circumstances, was paradise itself compared with the cabin, which smoking, drinking, and cooking had rendered every thing but agreeable.

LETTER XXXIII.

Dancing kept up—Effects of Poteen on the Company—Ball ends—Rainy Night—Morning—Pattigo—A long Swim—Breakfast—An Incident—Fox-catcher bitten by a Wild Cat—Ferocity of that Animal—Anecdotes of them—House Cats frequently run wild—Destructive to Rabbit Warrens—Cat-killing extraordinary—The Deer-skin—Snow fatal to the Red Deer—Anecdote of a Hind and Fawn—Blistered Foot—Simple Remedy—My descent by "The mother's side."

For a considerable time after we had retired to our cots, the ball was kept up with unabated spirit, upon a piece of level sward beside the river. The whiskey appeared to affect the company differently, and individual propensities were strikingly developed. Some of the boys were particularly amative, and the rude love-making we overheard at times amused us much; others betrayed a pugnacity of spirit which nothing but the master's propinquity repressed. By degrees, the company began to separate; the piper, whose notes for the last half-hour had been exceedingly irregular, now evinced unquestionable symptoms of his being "*done up*." Instead of the lightsome and well-sustained jig, strange and dolorous noises issued from the chanter,* and, as one of the fair sex observed, who, by-the-way, in passing, tumbled over the tent cords—"Martin was totally *smothered with spirits*, and a body could no more dance to his music, than do *the Patre o'pee* to a *coronach* at a wake."

It was well that this failure in the orchestral department brought the ball to a close, for at midnight the rain began to fall, and towards morning it came down in torrents. We were obliged to rise and slack the tent cords—but the markee was a double one, and perfectly water-tight, and, as the cots were slung from upright posts at least a foot from the ground, we suffered no inconvenience from the rain, except the noise it made in rattling on the tense canvass. This, however, we soon became ac-

* The principal or finger-pipe of the set.

customed to, and slept till eight o'clock, as sound as watchmen.

Long before we turned out, the colonel and priest were afoot, and we heard a prayer and supplication from the commander to old John, for a cup of strong coffee, while an idler was despatched to the next well by the churchman for a jug of cold spring water. Pattigo, who had rambled up the hills with a basket of fish and scallops, remarked, "that the gentlemen's *coppers*, he guessed, were rather hot this morning, and," as he eyed the empty bottles which were being removed, "to judge from the number of the *marines*, it was little wonder."

From Pattigo's *parlance*, I suspected that he had seen more of the world than usually falls to the lot of an ordinary skipper of a fishing boat—nor was I wrong. I learned from his master, that for some good conduct, no doubt, he had been accommodated with board and lodging in a king's ship for upwards of two years, and that his sojourn there would have been much longer, had he not managed to abridge the visit, by slipping one dark night over the vessel's side, and swimming to the shore, a distance of two miles. On this Byronian feat, however, the honest navigator seldom plumes himself, and it is only when he is "a bit by the head" that this exploit is mentioned.

We found the household fully occupied in the cabin—John in regulating the chamber of state, which, notwithstanding open doors and windows, still retained the miasma of tobacco-smoke, and Hennessey in skinning and breaking up the deer. If I had been yesterday delighted with his superior execution with the rifle, I was now surprised at the masterly manner in which he dressed and dismembered the venison. He is certainly a clever fellow, and could I but forget that he has finished a few of "the finest peasantry upon earth," the man would stand as high in my estimation as he does in his foster brother's, "our loving cousin."

When breakfast was ended; at which, to do them justice, the colonel and the priest did their *devoir* most gallantly, and were occupied in debating what should be the order of the morning's amusement, and to fish, or not to fish, appeared the question, an incident such as in this wild

and sylvan state of things every day produces, occurred. It was the arrival of a young lad, who brought an otter-skin of unusual size as a present to "the master," and a wounded hand, whereon Antony was required to exercise his leechcraft. He had been bitten by a wild cat,* and I had the curiosity to examine the wound. The hand was already in a state of high inflammation; and the ferocity of the creature must indeed have been extraordinary, to judge from the extent of the injuries it had inflicted. The flesh was sadly lacerated, and in two places the bone completely exposed.

The sufferer, it appeared, was not unknown to Antony, and from the free-masonry which passed between them, I discovered that he is of the same craft, and the person upon whom the otter-killer's mantle is likely to descend, when he, Antony, shall have gone the way of all flesh. The chief occupation of the wounded man is digging out foxes in the mountains, which he brings afterward for sale to the interior, and disposes of at a good price to the masters of hounds. This morning he had gone to a cover in the hills, in his usual avocation, when, from some traces he observed beneath a rock, he concluded that an animal was earthed there. Having put a terrier in, his suspicions were confirmed, as the dog came out severely torn, and assisted by a shepherd-boy, he laid rabbit-nets round the den, commenced digging, and before he had proceeded far, a cat of immense size bolted. She was breaking through the rabbit-net, when the *chasseur*, with more gallantry than prudence, seized her by the neck. The fierce animal instantly attacked him in turn, and fastening upon his hands with teeth and talons, held her desperate grasp until the boy, with the edge of the spade, broke her back. They brought the dead beast along with them; it was of a dirty gray colour, double the size of the common house cat, and its teeth and claws more than proportionately larger.

These animals fortunately are scarce, and generally frequent the neighbourhood of rabbit-warrens, where they prove amazingly destructive. Hennessey, two win-

* Appendix, No. XIV.

ters since, discovered a den in a cliff of a rock upon the shore, and adjoining the sand-banks, which are numerously stocked with rabbits. It cost him immense trouble to penetrate to the *form*, where he killed a male and female wild cat, the latter being large with young. Hennessey's patience and ingenuity were sorely taxed to effect their destruction, having been obliged to resort to gunpowder, and blow up a large portion of the rock before he could dislodge his dangerous game. In size and colour they were precisely similar to the animal killed in the mountain by the fox-catcher; and had they been permitted to continue their species, in a very short time the adjacent burrow would have been devastated.

Besides this large and ferocious species, the warrens upon the coast suffer much injury from the common cat becoming wild and burrowing in the rabbit-holes. They are sometimes surprised and shot in the sand-banks, or taken in traps; but they are generally too wary to be approached—and, hunting only by night, during the day they sleep in their dens, and are rarely met abroad.

Some estimate of their numbers may be formed, from the circumstance of five males having been killed in a herdsman's outhouse which joined the warren. They had been attracted there by one of their own species, and the noise having alarmed the peasant, he guessed the cause, and cautiously managed to stop the hole by which they gained entrance with a *turf-cleave*. Knowing the value of the capture, he kept guard upon the prisoners till morning, and then despatched information to the Lodge. My cousin, with his followers, promptly repaired to the place, and surrounding the barn with guns and grayhounds, bolted the wild cats successively until the whole number was despatched. This *chassé* was not only novel, but profitable. After the death of their persecutors, the rabbits increased prodigiously; but fears are entertained that these destructive animals are become once more abundant in the sand-banks.

When the dressings were removed, we found that the poor lad had been so much injured, that the apprehension of locked-jaw induced us to send him directly to the infirmary. There is a belief, and one more reasonable than many popular opinions in Ballycroy, that a wild cat's

bite is particularly venomous. My cousin remembers a case which terminated fatally with a servant of his father's; and the priest mentions another of a country girl, who, finding one of these animals in a barn, rashly attempted to secure it: the cat wounded her slightly in the leg, and for six months she was unable to use the limb.

When the unfortunate fox-catcher was leaving us, in return for a trifling donation, he pressed upon me the acceptance of a fine deer-skin which he produced from his wallet. "He had another for the master," he said, "and he would bring it to him when he returned from the hospital."

"And pray, my friend, how did you get these skins?"

The question puzzled the wounded man. "I found them *dead*, after the great snow last year."

"And after a lump of lead," quoth the otter-killer, "had made this fracture in the hide." And he pointed to an orifice in the skin where evidently a ball had perforated.

"Alas!" said the priest, "the snow is always fatal to the red deer. They are obliged to leave the upper range, and come down among the villages;* and there are, unluckily, too many of the old French guns in the country still, and *then* they are unfortunately busy."

By-the-by, speaking of the snow, a very curious circumstance occurred during its long continuance in 1822.

A fine hind, accompanied by a stout fawn, travelled across the lowlands in search of pasturage, which the deep snow had rendered unattainable in the mountains. Pressed by the severity of the weather, she at last established herself in a green field, which was within sight of the windows of the Lodge. For four weeks, during which the storm continued, she remained there in safety; for the wild visiters were protected by the commands of "the master;" and from being undisturbed, continued in the place they had first selected.

Thinking that they would be a valuable addition to Lord Sligo's park, my kinsman determined to have them captured, and the following Sunday was appointed

* By *a village* a very few houses are denominated; and a stranger would be sadly disappointed, if he formed his ideas of their extent on the English scale.

for the attempt. This day was selected, because the number of persons collected at the chapel would materially assist the execution of the plan.

The day came, and the whole population of the parish was employed. The place was surrounded by a multitude of people, who gradually reduced their circle until the deer and fawn were completely enclosed, and a *cordon* of living beings was formed, two deep, around them. The hind had remarked the preparations, and more than once attempted an escape; but, embarrassed by the fawn, her efforts were abortive. She appeared determined to share its fate, and affection was paramount to timidity. At last, when totally surrounded, her courage and address were almost incredible. She eyed the circle attentively, made a sharp peculiar noise, as if to warn her offspring of its danger, then charging the ranks where they appeared weakest, bounded over the heads of her opposers, and escaped. The confusion occasioned by this extraordinary proceeding favoured the deliverance of the fawn, who, profiting by the accident, galloped off unhurt, and with the dam, succeeded in regaining their native wilds.

The whole of the *dramatis personæ*, with the exception of the otter-killer and myself, had gone off to fish some three or four lakes, situated in a hollow in the mountains, and which are said to be remarkable for the number and flavour of their trouts. I have been prevented by an accident from accompanying the party; and though my wound be "not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door," it still renders me *hors de combat.* I blistered, or rather neglected a blistered heel: and the fag of yesterday has so excoriated the surface as to make it imperative upon me to lie by for a little. Antony engages to effect a perfect cure by to-morrow; and here I remain *tête-à-tête* with the otter-killer.

The old man proceeded skilfully enough; he lanced the blisters, and then applied the cuticle which covers a sheep's kidney, and which is very similar in appearance and effect to what we call "gold-beaters' leaf." This application prevented the heel from being frayed by the stocking. To the remainder of the foot, he rubbed a hot

mixture of tallow and whiskey; and his remedy was "the sovereignest thing on earth," for in twelve hours the cure was effected.

While he operated on my infirm foot, he amused me with one of his interminable stories. He says, by the "mother's side," that I and my cousin are descended from a lady called *Rose Roche*. When his leech-craft was ended, he retired "to stretch upon the bed"—John was too deeply engaged in culinary affairs to favour me with his company, and having no resource besides, I have been obliged to amuse myself by transcribing the *legend of Rose Roche*, and become thus a chronicler of the otter-killer.

LETTER XXXIV.

THE LEGEND OF ROSE ROCHE.

At sixteen Rose Roche was the loveliest maid in Ulster. In infancy she was found exposed at the gate of the Ursulines, and her beauty and destitution recommended her to the charity of the sisterhood. Educated accordingly for a conventual life, she had never passed the boundary of the garden walls, and accident discovered the existence of beauty, which else had faded unseen and unadmired within those cloisters to which from childhood it had been devoted.

Cormac More, Lord of Iveagh, was the patron and protector of the community at Balleek. At primes and vespers a mass was celebrated for his soul's weal. His Easter-offering was ten beeves and five casks of Bordeaux wine; and on the last Christmas vigil he presented six silver candlesticks to the altar of *Our Lady*. No wonder that this powerful chief was held in high honour by the sisterhood of Saint Ursula.

One tempestuous night in October, wearied with hunting, and separated from his followers by darkness and the storm, Cormac More found himself beneath the walls of the convent of Balleek. Approaching the gate, he wound his horn loudly, and begged for shelter and refreshment. Proud of this opportunity of affording hospitality to so noble and munificent a protector, the wicket was unbarred, the Lord of Iveagh admitted, and received in honourable state by the Lady Superior, and inducted with due form into the parlour of the Ursulines.

There a plentiful repast was speedily prepared, and the tired hunter was ceremoniously seated at the table. His morning's meal had been despatched before the sun had topped *Slieve Gallion*, and a long day's exercise had given him a keen relish for the evening banquet. The Lady Abbess feasted the patron of her house right nobly

—he was attended on assiduously by the novices—dish after dish succeeded in luxurious variety, until the chief requested the tables to be drawn, and with knightly courtesy entreated permission to pledge the holy mother of the Ursulines in a deep draught of Rhenish wine.

Then, for the first time, the novice who presented the cup attracted the good knight's attention. The folds of her thick vail could not conceal the matchless symmetry of her form; and, as she filled the chalice from the flagon, the exquisite proportions of her hand and arm struck Cormac More with wonder. At this moment her drapery became entangled with the jewelled pommel of the knight's rapier; a hasty attempt to disengage it was unsuccessful—the vail fell, and disclosed to the enraptured view of the Lord of Iveagh the loveliest features he had ever seen. Covered with blushes, which heightened her surpassing beauty, the novice caught her vail hastily up and retired from the parlour, while the knight, despite the evident displeasure that the accident had caused the Lady Abbess, gazed after the retiring girl until she disappeared among the cloisters. In vain the proud superior introduced costlier wines, of rare and ancient vintages; in vain she enlarged upon the piety of her order, and enumerated the number of the Ursulines who had been canonized: the knight's whole thoughts were engrossed with one lovely object—his courtesy and converse were feeble and constrained, until, piqued by his neglect, the abbess wished him a fair repose, and retired in full state from the apartment, preceded by crucific and taper, and followed by her attendant nuns.

Although the knight lay upon the bishop's bed, and occupied that honoured chamber where none of a less degree than a mitred abbot had hitherto been permitted to repose, no slumber sealed his lids, nor was the beautiful novice for a moment absent from his thoughts. Cormac More had declined many a splendid alliance; the Lord of Offaly proffered him an only sister, with a princely dower; and O'Nial himself courted him for a son-in-law, and promised him the barony of Orier, and Blanche, his fairest daughter. But, till now, Cormac had never loved: the beauteous cup-bearer seemed to him a being of another world; the more he dwelt upon her

image, the more his passion was excited; alliances with lords and princes were overlooked, disparity of rank and fortune was forgotten, and, ere the morning sun had lighted the storied window of the bishop's chamber, the knight's determination was formed, and matins were scarcely over when he demanded an audience of the Lady Abbess.

Never was there greater surprise than that with which the holy mother heard Cormac More express his passion for the novice of the Ursulines. Joy sparkled in her eyes as the noble Lord of Iveagh confided the secret of his love, entreated her powerful intercession, and begged for her sanction to his nuptials. As Rose was still unprofessed, there existed no spiritual barrier to her marriage. Flattered by the high honour conferred upon her house by the proudest baron of the Pale selecting a bride from the holy sisterhood, the superior willingly acceded to his request; his offers were accepted, and, ere the vesper-bell had tolled, the preliminaries were completed, and the fair novice had consented to become the bride of Cormac More.

But, alas! the wild ardour of the good knight, and the carnal motives of the abbess, caused both to neglect consulting another personage, namely, the blessed Ursula herself, in thus disposing of one devoted to her service from the cradle; and the saint felt the oversight. That night the abbess was tormented with fearful and portentous dreams; the Lord of Iveagh tossed restlessly upon the bishop's bed; and, if the novice closed an eye, her slumbers were broken with strange and incoherent visions. In vain, next day, the knight hunted from sunrise to curfew—his hounds were eternally at fault, and his followers appeared besotted or bewitched; the deer, when pressed to the utmost, vanished on the bare moor—and knight, squire, and yeoman unanimously agreed that the several parties interested in the chase were under the immediate influence of the prince of darkness.

Nor did the holy Superior of the Ursulines fare better than the persecuted knight and his afflicted companions. Every thing about the convent went astray, and the culinary preparations for entertaining the Lord of Iveagh

were awfully interrupted by accident and forgetfulness. The sister who presided over the pastry, and whose conserves, throughout a long and blameless life, had been pronounced unique and irreproachable, now actually omitted the necessary ingredients; the soup, when uncovered for a second, was invaded with such a discharge of soot, as reduced it, in colour at least, to an equality with the broth of Sparta. The nun at the organ, instead of a "*jubilate*," struck up a "*nunc dimittis*;" the very bells were "jangled out of tune"—and the Lady Abbess was horrified by a succession of prodigies that, from her novitiate to her promotion, had never before visited the quiet residence of the sisterhood of Saint Ursula.

What were the nocturnal visitations inflicted upon the lovely novice have not been exactly handed down. One thing alone is certain. She visited the Lady Abbess with the first dawn, and in her maternal bosom the bride elect deposited the causes of her sorrow.

In this perplexity, the knight and the superior held secret counsel in the parlour of the convent, and long and difficult was the conference. The result was, that Cormac More vowed a golden chalice to the offended virgin; and the abbess, not to be outdone in liberality, agreed to double aves and credos for a fortnight. But with Rose Roche herself the chief difficulty was found to lie. All measures proposed by the holy mother were inefficacious; and, in this desperate dilemma, it was deemed advisable to add to the number of counsellors, and the Prior of the Dominicans was summoned to the assistance of the conclave.

To that holy man the exigences of the respective parties were intrusted. The prior was sorely disturbed with doubts, but after a night's deliberation, during which he discussed a capon single-handed, and fortified his stomach with a second stoop of Rhenish wine, he decided that the Lord of Iveagh should add a flagon to the chalice—the abbess double her penitentiaries for a month—and Rose Roche undergo a private penance, which he, the prior, should communicate to the lady alone.

Never had such an alarming predicament a happeir

termination! The knight had scarcely laid himself upon the bishop's bed, until a sweet and refreshing slumber, blessed with the happiest visions, sealed his eyes; the Lady Abbess slept like a watchman; and since she had first gathered wild flowers in the convent garden, never did the fair novice enjoy more delightful dreams!

At last the bridal day arrived. The Lord of Iveagh was attended by a splendid following. The bells rang out a joyous peal, and the *élève* of the Ursulines left the home of her youth, escorted by three hundred horsemen, the consort of the proudest baron of the Pale. No lover could be more gallant than the noble husband of Rose Roche. Fête succeeded fête, and feasting continued in the castle of Cormac More, from Michaelmas till Advent.

Months passed away, and honey-moons cannot be expected to last for ever. Cormac More by degrees resumed his hunting, and again involved himself in the endless feuds and warfare of these restless times; and Rose Roche was often deserted for the chase or the field. She still was passionately loved, but in the bosom of a martial baron other and sterner feelings held a predominance. It is true that the young bride bore these frequent absences with wonderful resignation; and page and tirewoman confessed in secret, that Dhu Castle was gayer and merrier when Cormac and his stern companions were away.

A year wore on. The Lord of Iveagh was pensive and thoughtful; a cloud would often gather on his brow, and his bearing to his beautiful wife became chilling and repulsive. It transpired that two circumstances occasioned his anxiety. His lady wore a curious-fashioned coif, which concealed her tresses as effectually as if she never laid aside her nightcap; and the cherished hope of an heir to his ancient line now faded in the heart of Cormac More. Dhu Castle became duller and more gloomy—the fair baroness was more and more deserted—the chase and banquet were preferred by the moody knight to soft dalliance in his "lady's bower,"—and any pretext was gladly resorted to which offered an excuse for being absent from his joyless home.

Gentlewomen, in these perilous days, required and possessed an astonishing portion of philosophy. No baron's

lady "in the Pale"* submitted to a frequent separation from her lord with more laudable submission than Rose Roche. The customary resource of "wives bereaved" appeared any thing but consolatory to the dame. She determined to avoid crying, as being an unchristian waste of beauty—and instead of useless lamentations, she wisely substituted mirth and minstrelsy.

There was not a more accomplished bard in Ulster than Connor O'Cahan, and for seventy years he had resided with the lords of Iveagh. No tale or tradition connected with this puissant race was unknown to this gifted minstrel. Yet by some strange infirmity of taste, young Rose preferred the light romances of her lord's English page to all the legendary lore of the gray-haired harper; and listened with more delight to a merry roundelay from Edwin's lute, than to the deeds of Cormac's grandfather, as set out in song by Connor O'Cahan. The bard, it is true, was blind, and the page had the blackest eyes imaginable.

This unhappy predilection was not concealed from her lord; his jealousy instantly took fire, and the handsome page was suddenly removed, and none knew whither. The absence of an heir had now become matter for serious complaint; it was whispered among the baron's followers that there was no cause for hope; and maliciously insinuated, moreover, that the close coif adopted by the dame was worn to conceal some natural deformity. Cormac, a slave to suspicion, and instigated by his rude companions, insisted that the hood should be discarded, or that Rose Roche should retire in disgrace to the convent from whence she came.

On the alternative being proposed, the lady proved positive, and the coif was peremptorily retained. Cormac, irritated by opposition to his commands, was obstinate in his determination, and Rose Roche left the castle of her lord a repudiated wife, and once more returned to the convent of the Ursulines.

From the hour of their separation, the baron seldom smiled. To part from his wife was a trifle, but unluckily he had embroiled himself with the Church. The abbess espoused the lady's quarrel fiercely, and ave and credo

* Appendix, No. XV.

were no longer offered up for Cormac More! Notwithstanding past largess, beeves and wine-butts were forgotten; the candlesticks upon the altar no longer elicited a prayer; and his soul's health was no more attended to by the community, than the lowest horse-boy's of his train.

Thus matters stood; when one dark evening, returning from the chase, Cormac and his followers were surprised by a band of Catterans, and a fierce and desperate skirmish ensued. The outlaws were defeated, but the Lord of Iveagh was shot clean through the body with a three-foot arrow; and how could he have better luck?

Then it was that the sinful knight was tortured with remorse and unavailing sorrow. He cursed the evil counsellors who tempted him to insult Saint Ursula and her adopted daughter, and determining to be reconciled to his wife and the Church together, directed his followers to carry him to the Abbey of Balleek. His orders were obeyed, and the Lady Abbess consented to admit the dying noble. He was laid before the altar, and his injured wife, forgetting past resentment, was the first to rush from her cell and minister to his relief. In the fatal emergency, coif and vail were left behind; her raven tresses fell below her shoulders, and reached to her very waist, and Cormac was convinced, too late, that his ill-used consort had the finest hair in Christendom. Alas! those ebon locks had been the admiration of the whole sisterhood—and for penitential purposes the Dominican had enjoined their concealment for three years, when he gave spiritual counsel, in their hour of tribulation, to the abbess, the baron, and Rose Roche.

To make atonement for his former unkindness, he willed his rich domains to his beautiful widow. The Prior of the Dominicans indited the deed which disposed of his possessions; and the Church, of course, was not forgotten. Surrounded by all the emblems of religion, and with a splinter of the true cross in his right hand, the penitent baron breathed his last. He lay for three days and nights in the chancel, in great state; and was interred on the fourth morning, with all the ceremonies that both Ursulines and Dominicans could bestow.

The days of mourning passed over: Rose Roche exercised her resignation; and Dhu Castle became a different place to what it had been during the latter days of the defunct baron, and mirth and music were exchanged for the rude revelry of Cormac More. Her hall was filled with guests; at the board she did the honours nobly; and when she visited the green wood, with her gold-belled hawks and gallant retinue, she looked as if she had been ennobled from the Conquest, and in bearing and attire seemed "every inch a queen."

But amid all this splendour and magnificence, poor Rose had her own secret causes of inquietude. Beauty, accompanied by broad lands, could not but induce suitors without number to come forward, and never was woman, not excepting Penelope herself, more vigorously besieged. From past experience, Rose was not ambitious to exchange wealth and liberty for becoming the wife of some doughty baron, who would probably undervalue her charms just as much as he would overestimate his own great condescension in giving her his name. A tender recollection of one, long since lost, would cross her mind occasionally; and in her solitary hours, the black-eyed page haunted her imagination. Accordingly she eschewed all offers for her hand with excellent discretion. Few were offended, she managed her rejections so prudently; and through the first year of her widowhood, neither lands nor liberty were lost.

The consort of the wise Ulysses herself could not have held out for ever. Rose was severely pressed; for finding themselves foiled by her ready wit and good discretion when they attacked her singly, her lovers, from necessity, agreed to coalesce, and determined that one should be accepted, and the remainder be pledged to support the acquired rights of the fortunate candidate, as report said King Henry had resolved to gift a favourite noble with the person and estates of the beautiful widow.

This agreement of her suitors was politely but decisively intimated to Rose Roche, and the prior declared, "by the vestment," that to evade matrimony longer was impossible. "She had," the holy man said, "an ample

list to choose from; there were eleven suitors in the neighbourhood, besides the '*Big Man of the West*,' for so the Thane of Connaught was entitled."

In this extremity the lady resolved to exercise, at least, the privilege of free choice. The prior was directed to engross a bond, by which the respective candidates for her hand bound themselves to grant an uncontrolled right of selection to the widow, and covenanted, moreover, neither to molest, or permit her to be molested, when her choice was made. The deed was duly executed—the day for her decision was named—and a reasonable time allowed for "the Big Man of the West" to attend and try his fortune.

O'Connor was surprised when the determination of the fair widow was communicated. He had only time for a hurried preparation, as his rivals, from their vicinity to the lady, had never taken the remoter situation of "the Big Man" into their consideration when they named the day. O'Connor, however, was no sluggard; he collected his "following" with all haste, and every department was complete, when, alas, the chief harper fell sick without a cause, and no other was procurable for a distance of sixty miles. In this dilemma a Saxon youth, who, two years since, had been shipwrecked beneath the castle walls, was recollected. He could not, it is true, "strike the bold harp," but he had a sweet and mellow voice, and his skill upon the lute was admirable. In wordcraft he was a thorough proficient, and with lance and brand had more than once proved himself a man. O'Connor had no alternative, and the stranger was selected to fill a place that "Cathwold O'Connor of the harp" should have more worthily occupied.

Although the Thane of Connaught and his gallant company pushed forward with all the speed that man and horse could make, from bad roads and flooded rivers they were unable to reach the heights above Dhu Castle until the sun of the eventful day had set. In vain knight and squire pressed on their jaded steeds—evening fell; all the candidates besides had been in the hall for hours, and, as "the Big Man" had not appeared, according to modern parlance, he was voted present by the company, and the banquet was served.

Never with such heavy heart did Rose Roche assume the place of honour. Though her hall was lighted splendidly, and her table crowded with the proudest nobles within "the Pale"—though rich wine flowed, and the most skilful harpers in the province poured forth their lays of love and war—yet one heart was heedless of gayety and grandeur; and that one was hers on whom every eye was bent, in deep expectancy awaiting her decision.

The curfew rang—and in another hour the happy Lord of Dhu Castle would be proclaimed. As the moments flew, the beautiful widow became paler and more dejected; and breasts which had never quailed amid the roar of battle now throbbed as nervously as a maiden's when she listens to the first tale of love. The harps were mute, the revel became less loud, for all were deeply interested in that event which a brief space must determine. At this embarrassing moment, a loud blast was heard at the grand gate, and the seneschal rushed in to announce the arrival of the Thane of Connaught, attended by a noble following of, at least, one hundred horse.

The sudden and opportune appearance of him of the West seemed to affect the company variously. His rivals heard the news with mingled feelings of jealousy and alarm, which was in no way abated when the number of his attendants was announced, which exceeded that of their united followings. Rose Roche felt a secret pleasure at his coming; not that her sentiments towards O'Connor were more favourable than to her suitors generally, but his late arrival must necessarily occasion some delay, and postpone, though but for brief space, that dreaded moment when she should surrender a hand, without a heart, to her future lord.

While O'Connor, as the greatest stranger, was placed beside the lady of Dhu Castle, his bard stood behind his master, and his train bestowed themselves where they could best find room. As Rose Roche looked carelessly around to see that the band were fitly accommodated, her eyes met those of the young minstrel: the blood rushed to her brow; for excepting those of her own loved page,

she never looked upon a pair so black and sparkling as the stranger's.

When the Thane of Connaught had feasted to his heart's content, the Prior of the Dominicans produced the parchment, to which his rivals had affixed their signatures already. The "Big Man" listened attentively as the monk read it. "'Tis all fair," he said, as he placed his sign manual to the deed, "that lady should choose her lord; and thus I bind myself faithfully to abide the intents of this parchment." Then turning to Rose Roche, he thus proceeded: "It grieves me, that through accident I have unwittingly occasioned some delay; therefore, in pity to my gallant competitors, I beg you, lady, to terminate their suspense, and declare to this noble company the happy object of your choice—Nay, blanch not so, fair dame," for the lady became pallid as the white marble of a warrior's tomb: "exercise your own pleasure leisurely; and while I pledge thy matchless beauty in a cup of muscadine, Aylmer, my bard, shall sing a Saxon roundelay." As he spoke O'Connor signed to the minstrel, who, rising at his lord's bidding, struck with a rapid hand the prelude of a light romance, which, with a tremulous but powerful voice, he thus gave words to—

"Ladye, farewell!—the fatal hour
Has sped, for thus thy tyrant wills,
When he, who loves thee, leaves this tower,
Deserts gay hall and woodland bower
Of her for whom his heart's pulse thrills;
And thou art she—ladye—sweet ladye."

When the minstrel touched the prelude, Rose Roche became visibly affected; but when the words fell from his lips, a burning blush died her cheeks and brow, and her heart throbbed almost to bursting. Alas, it was the very roundelay the poor page had sung beneath her casement on that melancholy night when her defunct lord had expelled him from the castle! She turned hastily round to see who the strange youth might be who thus recalled her absent love in look and voice so forcibly. Blessed Ursula! it was he, the long-lost page.

The minstrel, as he caught her eyes, suddenly ceased

his melody—the lute fell from his nerveless grasp, and, overcome by feelings that could not be controlled, he sank upon the bench behind him. It was indeed young Aylmer. The well-remembered features could never be forgotten, although the boy had ripened into manhood—the thick down upon the lip had changed to a dark moustache—and the belt which once held a hunting-blade supported now a goodly brand.

The strange effect of the melody upon the lady, and the minstrel's sudden indisposition, could not escape remark; a startling suspicion flashed across the minds of the company, and, after a painful silence of some minutes, Hubert de Moore rose from his seat, and bowing to the very table, thus addressed the lady of the castle.

"Wilt thou forgive the humblest but most devoted of thy suitors, if he presume to remind you that the hour has long since passed when your election should have been made? Far be it from me, noble dame, to seem importunate; but suspense is irksome to those that love, and I and my brother nobles pray you to signify your pleasure, and end uncertainty at once.

While De Moore was speaking, Rose Roche appeared to recover her self-possession wonderfully; her eye brightened, her colour came again, and the compression of her lips proved that she was nerving herself for some determined effort. She rose slowly and gracefully, while a dead silence pervaded the hall; faint and tremulous as her first words were, they were distinctly heard by those remotest from the dais.*

"Noble lords," she said, "I own and thank your courtesy: I ask this holy churchman if I am to exercise free choice in this affair, unshackled with bar or condition, save my own pleasure; and if he whom I shall place here," and she pointed to the vacant seat beside her own, which had been reserved for the successful wooer, "shall be supported in all the rights and properties which he shall obtain through me."

"All this," said the prior, "is fairly stipulated in the intents of this scroll."

"Then will I not trespass on your patience, noble lords

* A place of honour in a baronial hall.

—*There* stands the object of my choice; and thus do I install him in this seat, as Lord and Master of Dhu Castle!"

She turned to the astonished minstrel as she spoke, and ere her words were ended, the youth was seated at her side.

A scene of wonder and wild confusion followed—most of the barons protested loudly against her choice; angry looks and threatening gestures were directed at the minstrel, and more than one sword was half unsheathed. O'Connor seemed thunderstruck—and the lady herself was the most collected of the company.

"How is this, Sir Knights?" she cried. "Is ordly word and written pledge so lightly held among you, that thus ye violate their sanctity? Thane of Connaught," she continued, as she addressed herself to "the Big Man," —"thy faith was never questioned, and thy word is held to be sacred as a martyr's vow. When the English king, under pain of confiscation, ordered thee to deliver the stranger up whom thou hadst resetted—although five hundred marks were put upon his head, what was thy answer? 'The lands may go, but plighted faith must stand!' The ink with which you bound yourself to the conditions of yonder bond is not yet dry upon the parchment; and wilt thou break thy word?"

"It is a trick," cried De Moore.

"The selection rests with ourselves alone," exclaimed Mandeville.

"We will never brook that page or minstrel should hold the lands and castles of Cormac More," said both together; and they laid their hands upon their swords; the attendants followed the example of their lords, and a scene of violence and discord was about immediately to ensue.

O'Connor slowly rose—he waved his hand to command silence, and his wishes were promptly obeyed.

"This is, indeed, an unexpected choice," he said: "Sir Prior, read thy parchment aloud, that all may hear, and read it carefully, line after line, and syllable by syllable; see that a letter be not omitted." The monk obeyed. "The document is a plain one," said "the Big Man," "and by it, the lady has a good right to choose whom

she listeth for her consort.—Lady of Iveagh," he continued, as he turned to the blushing widow, "is this youth the husband of thy choice?"—"He and none besides, so help me saints and angels!" was the solemn answer. "Then, by my father's ashes, and a knight's word that never was questioned, thou, Aylmer Mowbray, shall this night possess thy bride! And why, my lords, chafe you so at this?" for the storm was again about to burst forth: "Is it because the monk was but a sorry lawyer, and the lady took advantage of a loose parchment, which should have bound her better? Is it that the Lord of Dhu Castle was once a page? What was thy ancestor, De Moore (I mean not to offend thee), but usher to the Lord Justice? and thine, Mandeville, but chamber-groom to Strongbow? Aylmer, I love thee too well to envy thee thy good fortune:—thy lute has won the lady—thy lance must keep her lands. Kneel down, minstrel no longer—rise up, mine own knight banneret! And now, Lords of the Pale, Henry himself could not confer a nobler dignity; for O'Connor's knight is standard-bearer to the King of Connaught! Does any here gainsay his rank and dignity? The sword that conferred the honour is ready and able to maintain it!" And O'Connor, as he ended, flung belt and rapier on the table.

But none seemed disposed to quarrel with him; and gradually they followed his example, and admitted the lady's right of choice. The mirth and feasting were resumed; and each, after reasoning with himself, finding that the chances of individual success were greatly against him, became reconciled to lose the lady and her lands. Before midnight struck, the prior performed the marriage ceremony; and while O'Connor bestowed the beauteous bride, De Moore himself attended upon the fortunate minstrel.

Nor did Sir Aylmer Mowbray disappoint his patron's expectation. As his lute was sweetest in the bower, his plume was foremost in the field. He held the possessions he gained by his lady against every claimant: sons and daughters blessed his bed, and transmitted his titles and estates to posterity; and thus, more than one powerful house traces its lineage back to an "*élève*" of the Ursulines and the *black-eyed page*.

LETTER XXXV.

Mountain Loughs—Trout—Their Varieties—Otter Haunt—The Upper Lake—Goose-fishing—Weather breaks—Prospect of leaving the Cabin—Traits of Character—Crimes—Abduction—Causes—Murder—Why prevalent—Distillation; its extent and cause—Anecdote of a Peasant's Ruin.

THE fishing party had been successful, and returned late in the evening with two baskets of trout, which, although of small size, were remarkable for beautiful shape and excellent flavour.

It is a curious fact, that the loughs where the party angled, though situated in the same valley, and divided only by a strip of moorland not above fifty yards across, united by the same rivulet, and in depth and soil at bottom,* to all appearance, precisely similar, should produce fish as different from each other as it is possible for those of the same species to be. In the centre lake, the trout are dull, ill-shapen, and dark-coloured; the head large, the body lank, and though of double size, compared to their neighbours, are killed with much less opposition. In the adjacent loughs, their hue is golden and pellucid, tinted with spots of a brilliant vermillion. The scales are bright, the head small, the shoulder thick, and from their compact shape, they prove themselves, when hooked, both active and vigorous. At table they

* I never observed the effect of bottom soil upon the quality of fish so strongly marked as in the trout taken in a small lake in the county of Monaghan. The water is a long irregular sheet of no great depth—one shore bounded by a bog, the other by a dry and gravelly surface. On the bog side, the trout are of the dark and shapeless species peculiar to moory loughs—while the other affords the beautiful and sprightly variety, generally inhabiting rapid and sandy streams. Narrow as the lake is, the fish appear to confine themselves to their respective limits; the *red* trout being never found upon the bog moiety of the lake, nor the *black* where the under surface is hard gravel.

are red and firm, and their flavour is particularly fine—while the dark trout are white and flaccid, and have the same insipidity of flavour which distinguishes a spent from a healthy salmon. The red trout seldom exceed a herring-size, and in looking through the contents of the baskets, which amounted to at least twelve dozen, I could only find two fish which weighed above a pound.

The dark trout, however, from their superior size, are more sought after by the mountain fishermen. They rarely are taken of a smaller weight than a pound, and sometimes have been killed, and particularly with a worm, or on a night-line, of a size little inferior to that of a moderate salmon.

The fishing-party determined that Antony's account of the otters being very numerous about those lakes was perfectly correct. Their paths between the waters were much beaten, and the *spraints** of the animal fresh and frequent.

There is a lake still farther up the mountains, and some hundred feet above the level of these loughs, which produces trout not more remarkable for size than for their peculiarity in never rising at a fly, or taking a bait; and yet they are frequently observed by the herdsmen who frequent the valley where the lake is situated, rising over the water, or, to use their own phrase, "tumbling about like dogs." From the known attachment of the lower classes of this country to indulge in the "wild and wonderful," their size or existence might be doubtful, were it not that they run like eels in the latter part of harvest, and at that season are taken, after a flood, in the pools of the little river which communicates directly with the lake. These trout have been found to weigh upwards of *twelve* pounds, and are said to be in shape and colour like large gillaroos, and of superior flavour when brought to table.

The otter-killer declares that he fished this lake repeatedly, and while he exhausted all his piscatory skill, he never could induce a trout to rise. He recollects, however, hearing "when a boy," that there was formerly an old man, who resided contiguous to the lake, who caught

* Traces.

trout most plentifully near the centre of the water, by floating lines across it, their ends being attached to the legs of geese; but he admits his belief that this was but a popular conceit, and wisely comes to a conclusion, "that there is a sea-horse, or some such devil, in the lough, which prevents the fish from taking fly or worm."*

Three days have passed, and the weather has been wet and boisterous. The moors have become soft, and are now very distressing to traverse. The grouse have deserted their customary haunts, are found with difficulty, and, from their wildness, will hardly stand the dogs. Winter is fast approaching, and the time is close at hand when the cabin must be abandoned for the more substantial comforts of the lodge.

And I shall leave this hut and these hills with sincere regret. Palled with the pleasures of the world, I found here that rude but real happiness which for years before I had sought in vain. *Here*, I associated with a new order of beings. I compared them with the artificial society I had consorted with, and found among them some traces of natural virtues, which ultra civilization has banished from the rest of mankind. There may be here, no doubt, much ignorance and superstition to be regretted, and false opinions and falser modes of action to be corrected—but even for their vices I can find an apology, and their worst crimes will appear, upon examination, to be either consequent upon moral neglect, or arising from rude and barbarous notions of what appears to them nothing but retributive justice.

The grave offences with which these wild people are principally charged appear to be abduction and murder; and both are of frequent recurrence. The first, indeed, is so prevalent, that any lady bent upon celibacy had better avoid Ballycroy, and particularly so if she has obtained the reputation of being opulent. This crime, however, is seldom of a dark character, and is generally

* In the neighbourhood of Minola there is a lake called Carramore, where the trout are said to be equally large, and in refusing baits and flies equally refractory. I have never fished the water, or seen the trout; but they are taken during harvest floods, in a mill-race, which runs directly from the lough; their size is from four to ten pounds.

traceable to local causes, and the very unceremonious mode in which parents conclude matches between their children, without consulting the inclinations of the parties most concerned in the affair. Probably the whole matter is arranged between the fathers during an accidental meeting at a fair, or, likelier yet, over an *egg-shell** drinking-bout in a poteen-house. The due proportions of cattle and *dry money*† which are to be given and received are regularly specified; and the youthful couple who are to be united by the silken bond of Hymen are first acquainted with their purposed happiness after the priest has been sent for to solemnize the nuptials. No wonder, therefore, if the lady have another *liaison*, that she intimates her feelings to the unfortunate man. He finds no difficulty in enlisting a sufficient number of his faction to "hoist away" the intended bride, and carry her to some distant hill or island. Then a wonderful series of bargain-making commences:—upon the lady's side, it being insisted that the abductor shall forthwith make her "an honest woman;" while the gallant usually demurs to the "*amende honorable*," until the "consideration" for doing the same is propounded and guarantied. Now it is that the *priest* engages deeply in the negotiation. He assumes the first place in the *corps diplomatique*, and becomes prime minister. In the conduct of the affair, no doubt, himself is interested; he is anxious to effect hymeneals, for hence arises his principal revenue, and matrimony is the best feather in his wing—and, independent of the nuptial fee, contingent christenings and increased *house-money*‡ are in prospective. But the lover has it all his own way. A week's residence in the mountains has perilled the lady's reputation beyond recovery; as she has gotten *a blast*, her matrimonial market is spoiled, and

* It may be easily imagined that *glass* is a scarce article in Ballycroy. Accordingly, in the still and drinking houses, an egg-shell is used as a substitute.

† "Dry money" is synonymous with "hard cash."

‡ The revenues of the Roman Catholic clergy are derived from certain fees payable for marriages and christenings, with an annual tax of two shillings upon every house in the parish. These, with Christmas and Easter offerings, presents, and legacies, amount, in populous parishes, to a very considerable sum.

nothing remains but an amicable arrangement. Terms are accordingly made—the parties become one flesh—the priest is considered for his great and valuable services by "both the houses," and "one raal *rookawn* of a runaway match" is better to *his reverence* than thrice the number of weddings perpetrated by general consent.

This milder class of abduction is unfortunately not the only one; girls having property, or who are likely to possess it, are oftentimes forcibly carried off. Secreted in the mountains, they are not easily recoverable by their friends, and left at the mercy of the ruffian and his confederates, they are at last obliged to become the legal property of the despoiler. As the abductor is generally some idle dissipated blackguard, the fate of the ill-starred being who is united to him under such circumstances for life is truly lamentable.

The second and worst description of crime, of which this remote district unhappily affords too many instances, is murder. Many circumstances tend to encourage it. The system of clanship, and the imperfect administration of the laws, are chief causes. A strange infatuation prevents these people from surrendering a culprit; and to conceal or abet the escape of a criminal from punishment is felt to be a sort of moral obligation not to be got over. Hence, the feudal system prevails in Ballycroy of repaying injury by injury; rather than submit the offender to the ordinary course of justice, violences committed by one faction are fearfully returned by the other; and in a country where ardent spirits are easily procured, and where ancient customs, and the endless number of holy days enjoined by the Church of Rome bring the parties into frequent collision, it is not wonderful that disastrous consequences ensue. Maddened by whiskey, the national pugnacity bursts forth, old injuries are remembered, the worst passions are called into action, and loss of life is too commonly the result.

That any competent moral remedy can be employed to check these barbarisms is hopeless, while the present destructive system of private distillation is encouraged by the landlord and abetted by the revenue. The landlord is the chief delinquent—for owing to abominable *jobbing*, the moneys taken from the public purse, and intended to

open a communication between this wild country and the more inhabited districts, have been scandalously malversated, and lavished upon useless works, merely to reward favouritism, or benefit agents and dependants. No serviceable attempts have been made to facilitate the transport of grain from the mountains to those towns from whence it could be sent abroad; and hence, the only markets which could be legitimately and beneficially resorted to by the peasantry are, from want of means of egress from the highlands, *embargoed* to these hapless people. Left to their own resources, what can this wretched population do? At the mercy of hireling drivers and cold-hearted agents, they are required on a given day to produce the rent—honestly, if they can—but to produce it. To convey their miserable grain crop to a distant market would greatly abate the amount of the sale, by the expense and difficulty attendant upon the carriage. An easier mode of disposing of it is presented. The still is substituted for the market, and hence, three parts of the corn grown in these bogs and hills are converted into whiskey.

At first sight, the advantages of private distillation appear immense. The grain will realize nearly three times the price that it would have produced if sold for exportation; but when the demoralization, and waste, and ulterior risk are considered, the imaginary profits are far overbalanced by the certain or contingent losses which attend it.

From the moment that the grain is first *wetted* to the time the spirit has been *doubled*, the ordinary habits of the peasant are interrupted. Night and day, he must be on the alert—and if there were no greater penalty beyond the unbidden visits of every idle blackguard who drops in to taste the "barley bree," it would be a sufficient punishment for the offence. But this is the smallest tax upon the produce of the still: when the process is complete, much of the produce is expended in drunken hospitality. If, after all these drawbacks, the residue be disposed of in the town, or sold to some itinerant whiskey dealer, the adventure is prosperous; but the chances of detection, seizure, fine, and imprisonment are so mul-

titudinous, as to render the vending of this pernicious article a ruinous trade. To succeed encourages him to continue in this hazardous manufacture; and then upon him who night and day parches in a still-house certain drunkenness is entailed, with sooner or later a loss of property, from the casualties incident to the adventure; and hence, more people have been beggared by this demoralizing traffic, than all the misfortunes which bad seasons, bad crops, and, worse still, bad landlords, could accomplish.

Difficult as the task is found of conveying grain from the highlands, the denizens of the coast possess little advantage from their own locality. Want of harbours renders the voyage hazardous, and the arrival of the grain at market an uncertainty; and many a peasant, from rough seas and contrary winds, has been ruined. One instance of this was mentioned, and it so forcibly exemplifies the misfortune, that I shall transcribe it.

A person of comfortable means, having suffered severe loss from private distillation, determined that he would never "*wet a grain* during his natural life." He shipped his corn accordingly, in a *hooker* for Westport, it being the nearest place where a purchaser could be found. Bad weather and contrary winds came on, and during eight days, for so much time was occupied in the passage, the grain was exposed to rain and spray eternally, and when it reached its destination was found to be so much damaged as to be rendered unfit for sale. The unlucky owner was eventually obliged to bring it back, and in self-defence to *malt and distil it.* The process was completed, and the spirits safely brought to the town of Castlebar. There it was seized by the revenue, the proprietor imprisoned for four months, and his cattle and furniture at home *canted* to pay that rent which the corn, had it been marketable, would have more than realized. By this accumulation of misfortune, the unhappy man was reduced to the greatest misery, and from having been once an opulent landholder, he is at this moment a *cottier* upon what was formerly his farm, with nothing to support a wife and seven children but a limited potato-garden, and occasionally *sixpence a day,* when he is lucky enough to obtain employment at that price.

LETTER XXXVI.

Day fixed for our Departure—Party separate—Last day's Shooting—The Secret Valley—The Fishers—Curious Incident—Dinner—An Alarm—Night Search for the Otter-killer—The old Man found—His Recovery—Narrative of the Accident.

THE day for our departure is fixed, and the order for breaking up our bivouac has issued; we leave the cabin to-morrow, and some of us, in course of mortal changes and chances, are never fated to visit it again, and "breast the keen air" of these extensive mountains. We have devoted this our last day to separate pursuits. I, with my kinsman, take to the hills, while the colonel and the priest descend the river, thus embracing sports by "fell and flood." Old Antony, encouraged by the report of the fishing-party, has hobbled off at daybreak, with his trap and terrier, determined, as he expressed it, "to try his fortune once more before he died." A shepherd-boy accompanied him, and when the distance and difficulty of ground is considered, the old man's courage is surprising, and nothing but that master-passion, which through a long life has been remarkable, could nerve the otter-killer to the enterprise.

Our last day's sport, during its forenoon, was most unpromising. The birds were scarce, unsettled, and "wild as hawks." From the extreme steadiness of the dogs, we sometimes succeeded in surprising them; but generally, the cock took alarm, and gave the signal for escape, and the brood got off with a random shot or two. At last, when almost weary of following birds who appeared determined not to stand a point, accident did for us what neither art nor local experience could achieve.

On a narrow strip of heather that fringed the banks of a little rivulet, one of our youngest and wildest setters stopped in his career as if he had been shot. The suddenness of his check, and the steady point he stood at, intimated that the birds were immediately beside him; and

while my cousin, who happened to be at a little distance, hurried up, Hennessey observed a splendid pack of fifteen birds stealing off across the bare bog. It was a brood of very unusual number to meet with at this advanced season, when the strongest packs have generally been reduced by gun or vermin. The moor that adjoined the banks on which the grouse was found was a barren soft surface, without either heath or broken ground to cover our approach; and when we attempted to close up, the cock took wing, and the pack rose instantly and crossed the flats, continuing their flight over a small hill, until we lost them altogether.

We were very doubtful whether we should follow them, as the hill was particularly steep and barren, and the ground beyond it, to judge from appearances, as bare as the exposed moorland the birds had quitted. At this moment of indecision, Hennessey recollected that there was a little valley beneath the brow where the grouse had left our view; but my kinsman, often as he had been on these hills, had never before been aware of its situation. Hennessey's information determined us to proceed; we accordingly clambered up the ascent, and when we reached the brow of the height, discovered immediately below one of the sweetest glens I ever looked at, stretching between the basis of the hill we occupied and the higher ridge beyond it. It was an admirable retreat for grouse—several rivulets trinkled through the hollow, and everywhere it was covered with thick tall heath, in rich blossom, and the cranberries, of which these birds are particularly fond, were growing all around in great abundance. Delighted with our new discovery, we determined to investigate this land of promise closely, and our expectations, though excited by the appearance of this beautiful glen, were amply realized. We found the pack that escaped us in the low grounds, and they paid dearly for the long walk they had given us in the pursuit. The valley produced two other broods; and after some hours of capital shooting, we found our game-bags, when we left the glen, increased by twenty-three of the finest birds I ever saw. We might have thinned the packs still more, but my kinsman was anxious to leave this secret valley

with a sufficient stock to render it a sure resource when grouse could not otherwise be obtained. This was indeed a good wind-up to our highland shooting; and as we sprang several scattered birds during our return, we decided that this was our best day throughout the season, and worthy of the brightest page of the game-book, in which all our failures and successes were duly and faithfully chronicled since we took to the hills.

The fishing-party had come back before we arrived at the cabin. They, too, had been tolerably well amused, though their angling was profitless. They hooked and landed several salmon, but the fish were too *red* to be producible at table, and were, of course, when brought to shore, liberated from the fly, and returned to the river.

A curious incident, however, supplied us with an excellent *white* fish. The servant who brought the post-bag, when in the act of crossing the river, which, in his route from the lodge, he was obliged to do repeatedly, most unexpectedly encountered a large otter carrying off a salmon he had just seized. The postman attacked the poacher vigorously, who, dropping his prey, glided off into the deep water at the tail of the ford. The spoil proved to be a fresh salmon not twenty hours from the sea, and consequently in prime condition. The otter showed himself the best artist of the day; for, while the colonel and his companion returned with empty baskets, the little animal managed to secure the finest and freshest salmon in the river.

But it was unnecessary to despoil the honest otter of his booty to furnish out our table. Pattigo had gone to *the bank* overnight, and sent us early in the forenoon a basket of excellent flat-fish. John had already a fine dory and a pair of soles in preparation before the postman came, and the salmon being deemed superfluous, was consigned to some of the *hangers-on*, who, having subdivided it without delay, proceeded to broil their respective portions at one of the fires out of doors, where, by-the-way, most of our own cookery was carried on.

To give *éclat* to our parting feast, a red-deer haunch had been reserved, and in its roasting, John, as poor Napoleon would say, "covered himself with glory."

Dinner passed, as such a dinner should pass. The colonel and the priest appeared bent upon conviviality. We too prepared for a jovial carouse; and it was generally determined that our parting banquet should be "the merriest, *as* the last."

Evening passed quickly—there was no moon visible till after midnight, and the wind, which had hitherto been unheard, began to make that mournful noise around the cabin which generally indicates an approaching change of weather. The otter-killer's absence was now, for the first time, remarked, and I observed that my kinsman rose frequently from the table, to look long and anxiously from the window. Another hour passed, and our alarm was fearfully increased, for, aware of the feebleness of the old man, we apprehended that he would be unable to make good his journey; and, if benighted in the moors, the probability was great that he would perish of cold before the morning.

While we remained in painful suspense, each feeling an unwillingness to interrupt the comfort of the evening by expressing fears that happily might only be imaginary, a squall rushed up the river, and showed us that the wind had chopped round to the westward several points since twilight. At that moment a commotion was heard outside—the pipes ceased—loud and earnest whisperings succeeded—the door opened, and John, with a pale face and hurried voice, told us that the otter-killer was missing, and the boy who had accompanied him in the morning to the lakes had now returned, without being able to give any tidings of old Antony, from whom it appeared that he had separated several hours before.

"Get lights instantly," exclaimed my cousin. "Away, all of you! disperse right and left across the bogs. Come, Frank, on with the brogues. I fear our poor otter-killer is but 'a lost priest.' No, colonel, your service would be useless—" for the commander, forgetting gout and rheumatism, and alive only to the danger of his ancient associate, had prepared to accompany the party.

In a few minutes every effective member of our body politic was in motion. The scene was uncommon and picturesque. It being pitch-dark as the respective

parties dispersed across the moor on their different routes to the mountain lakes, the stream of torch-light falling upon the figures, as they were revealed and hidden by the inequalities of the ground they traversed, was really imposing. Their wild shouts died gradually as the distance increased; and presently nothing was heard by our party but the rushing of the stream and the moaning of the blast.

Obedient to Hennessey's advice, we followed the river-path, as the likeliest one which the otter-killer would select in his unfortunate attempt to return to the cabin. On either side of the moorland the peasants were extended, and occasionally we caught a glimpse of their fading lights, as they glanced and disappeared among the hillocks. Our own path was so rough and difficult, that the torch could not secure us from many and severe falls; and from the extreme darkness of the night, it was too evident that Antony could never make good his way. We almost despaired of being enabled to render assistance to the unfortunate object of our search.

Suddenly, Hennessey, who led the party, halted—"By heaven!" he exclaimed, "I heard either a fox's *whimper*, or the cry of a dog."

He put his finger to his lips and whistled shrilly, and instantly a long-sustained howl answered to the signal.

"It is *Venney's* cry," said our leader. "God grant that her master be still alive!"

We pushed forward rapidly for several hundred yards in the direction the noise was heard from; and the whining of a dog, broken now and then by a long and piercing howl, continued to guide us. We reached the place, and on turning a rock which elbowed into the river abruptly, found the old man exteded on the ground, cold and motionless. The trap was bound across his back, and a large otter lay at some yards' distance from the place where he had fallen.

We raised him up, while the faithful terrier frisked about us, and testified sincere delight at the promised deliverance of her master. The old man's eyes feebly opened when the torch-light flashed upon his face,

This symptom of existing life encouraged us; and as his extremities were cold and powerless, his master and I rubbed them briskly between our hands, while Hennessey poured some brandy down his throat.

"We want instant help," said my cousin; "jump upon the bank, and see if anybody is near us."

His foster-brother rushed up the brow, and whistled loudly, but the signal was unheard or unheeded. Again he exerted himself, but ineffectually, to make the flanking parties hear him; there was no reply.

"This may be heard," he muttered, and drawing a pistol from his breast, the loud report was answered by a distant halloo. Next moment lights appeared, and our shouts and whistles directed the torch-bearers to the place.

We disencumbered the dying man of the iron trap, and our attempts to restore suspended animation appeared to be partially successful. But the priest, who led the party coming to our relief, gave us still better hopes, by ascertaining that the old man's pulse was beating.

From the assistance we received, the unfortunate otter-killer was transported quickly to the cabin. A bed was already heated, and John had abundance of warm water to bathe his chilled limbs. Our unabated efforts were crowned with ultimate success, for before midnight he had recovered his speech, and was enabled, though with some difficulty, to give us the particulars of his unlucky excursion.

He reached, it appeared, the loughs soon after daylight, and discovered the numerous footmarks which the fishing-party had already observed. One trace he particularly followed, and from the *spraints* concluded the animal would cross the path again before evening; and after setting his trap, Antony retired to a distance, whence, himself unseen, he could watch the event.

At twilight, as the old man had conjectured, the otter, on his return, crossed the path and was secured, and the hunter and his terrier made good the capture. Proud of his success, which to the old man seemed a proof that his energies were not yet gone, he foolishly endea-

voured to carry this trophy of his skill along with him, instead of leaving it with his trap, for some *gassoon* to bring in the morning to the cabin. He turned his steps homewards; but the trap and otter, with the soft and harassing ground he had to traverse, speedily exhausted his feeble strength; the light faded away, the wind rose, and before he crossed the swamp and gained the firm but rugged path beside the river, the darkness rendered it almost impossible for even a young person to have proceeded safely. After feeble and slow efforts to get forward, he stumbled over a stone, his energies were totally exhausted by fatigue, and he was unable to rise again.

His faithful dog couched herself beside her fallen master, and the last sounds the despairing otter-killer heard were the long and mournful howls with which Venom mourned over his calamity.

Guided by the torch-lights, we carried the rescued sufferer to a place of refuge. Every thing that kindness could suggest was done to effect his restoration; and the old man owned it as a consolation, that he was saved from perishing in the desert; and that, in death, he should have those around his bed, who, in life, had possessed his love, fidelity, and veneration.

LETTER XXXVII.

The Otter-killer carried to the Lodge—Fishing homewards—Angling closes for the Season—Remarks—Feelings on the Occasion—Smuggler appears—Landing a Cargo—Captain Matthews—The Jane—Cutter stands out to Sea—Hooker on a Rock—Traveller alarmed—Anecdote of an Englishman.

THE illness of the old otter-killer has clouded our moorland excursions at their close, and we leave with melancholy forebodings our mountain bivouac. Antony, at his own request, was carried to the lodge to-day; and when the difficulty of the ground and the frequent crossing of the river is considered, it was an arduous undertaking. The camp-followers arranged a rude litter; and as works of mercy are highly estimated by pious Catholics, there were more volunteers to assist in transporting the dying man than could well find employment.

During our progress down, we have had some hours superior sport with the angle. Pullgarrow, that inimitable hole, has more than realized what the colonel and our kinsman have said and sung in its commendation. In Christendom it could not be surpassed, and of this best of pools may be said, that "none but itself can be its parallel."

In the minor streams we killed more red trout this morning than we do generally. Indeed, from the character of this river, I have been puzzled to account for the evident scarcity of this species in a water that appears so especially adapted for them. The clearness of the stream, the gravelly soil it flows over, its pools and rapids, all seem calculated to produce red trout plentifully. But they are not numerous; and as the flies we invariably use are formed for the other species, it is not surprising that we find but few red trout in the baskets.

With this day's fishing our river sports terminate. Rods and lines and all the *materiel* of the craft will now be

laid in ordinary, and till spring comes round again, other sports must occupy the idle hours. I have learned more —although I acknowledge with all humility my unworthiness as an angler—by a few days' practical experience, than I could have almost considered possible; and I have ascertained how inadequate theory is to instruct a neophyte in the art. In angling, however, like other manly exercises, men are constituted by nature to succeed or fail. We know that there are persons who, though born in a *preserve*, could never shoot, even tolerably, while others, with less advantages, speedily become adepts. One man can never learn to ride; and another, in a short time, can cross the country like "a winged Mercury." The same rule holds good in angling.—A. in a short period becomes perfect master of the arcana of the gentle science; while B. will thresh a river to eternity, dismissing flies, breaking tops, losing foot-links, and perpetrating every enormity with which a tyro is chargeable.

Yet to a man naturally *handy* and observant, little is required to acquire the art, but a good stream and tolerable attention. He will soon gain more practical information and mechanical science than any book can inculcate. And it will be only when, by practice, he has acquired a knowledge of the science, that he will be able to comprehend what written theories profess to teach.*

We had fished the deep hole above the river, and our rods are, for the *last time* handed to the attendants. And shall I never wile my idle hours away beside that beautiful stream in the intervals of unfriendly sunshine, stretched beneath a bank, turning the light pages of a book, or watching in dreamy indolence the rushing of the river? Shall I no more watch the eddying of the pool, with its sparkling surface broken by the bold and glorious spring which marks the salmon rejoicing, like a returned prodigal, in his native river? No, my foot will never press that bank again; nor shall I, beside that glassy water, enjoy those tranquillizing feelings, which the slave of fashion, the creature of society, can neither know nor estimate.

We had scarcely left the river, when a man who stood upon an eminence that commanded an extensive view seaward, gesticulated with great energy, and made, what appeared to me, some momentous communication in the *mother tongue*.

"It is *the Jane!*" exclaimed my kinsman, as he bounded up the bank to gain the summit of the hillock. I did not comprehend exactly what the affair was which created such powerful emotions among my companions; but when I reached the height, a scene of extreme interest was presented.

Between the Black Rock and the island of Devilawn, a cutter was opening the bay, and standing from the westward under a press of canvass. She carried a spanking breeze in, and as her course was two points off the wind, her sails drew, and she came up "hand over hand." The approach was evidently expected, and from every nook and inlet row-boats were being launched—the whole population poured forth from the mountain villages—and the coast, as far as the eye could reach, was in marvellous commotion. Nothing could be more beautiful and picturesque than the appearance of the smuggler. The sunshine fell upon her snowy canvass, a private signal fluttered from the mast-head, and the union-jack was flying at the peak, while occasionally a sheet of broken foam sparkled round her bows, as she held her onward course gallantly,

"And walk'd the waters like a thing of life."

In a few minutes after her having been first discovered, boats were pulling from the shore in all directions, while the cutter closed the land fast. When abreast the Ridge Point, she suddenly rounded-to, handed her gaff-topsail, took in jib and foresail, hauled up the main-tack, and waited for the boats.

"I cannot go on board," said my kinsman, with a heavy sigh, "being, alas! like master Robert Shallow, 'a poor esquire of this county, and one of the king's justices of the peace;' but though I shall not pay my personal respects, yet will not my old friend Jack Matthews forget me; but you shall board *the Jane*, and witness a bustling business.

I'll promise you a hearty welcome from the skipper—and see, you are just in time, for the *gig* is on the water."

As he spoke, he hailed the boat, which returned to the beach, took me on board, and then pulled off for the vessel, which, in a quarter of an hour, we reached.

It was indeed a bustling scene—a hundred boats were collected around the smuggler, who, to use nautical parlance, had already "broken bulk," and was discharging the cargo with a rapidity, and yet orderly and business-like system, that was surprising.

I was immediately recognised by Captain Matthews, and politely invited to his cabin. Aware of the hurry consequent upon this dangerous traffic, on the plea of his presence being requisite upon deck, I would have declined the honour; but the gallant captain remarked, with great indifference, "that he left the delivery of his cargo to the agents and purchasers, and could not spend an hour or two more to his satisfaction, than in entertaining, in his own door-way, the kinsman of his respected friend."—And calling for the steward, he stepped forward to order some refreshments.

While he was thus engaged, I had ample time to satisfy my curiosity, and observe the conduct of this illicit traffic. There appeared no confusion attendant on the delivery of the tobacco to its respective proprietors, who had already engaged certain proportions of the cargo, which they received upon the production of small tickets, specifying the quantity and description of the goods. The business having been previously arranged on shore, before the arrival of the smuggler, facilitated the dangerous trade.

When I found myself in the cabin with the bold outlaw—for Matthews had been legally denounced for many daring aud successful contests with the revenue—I could not but admire the thorough indifference to possible consequences which this singular personage exhibited. He knew that several men-of-war were at the moment cruising on the station, and that they had been apprized he sailed from Flushing, and that this coast was the spot selected by the owners to effect the landing—yet he laughed and drank as gayly as I should in a club-house, and despatched the

messages which were occasionally brought down with perfect *nonchalance*. He spoke principally of his own exploits; and the scene was admirably in keeping. Around the cabin, muskets, pistols, and blunderbusses were secured in arm-racks, and cutlasses and tomahawks were suspended from the bulk-heads. His had been a wild career; and though not past the middle age, his life teemed with "perilous adventure." I was so much amused with his varied narratives of brave attempts and desperate successes, that the second hour slipped away before I arose and took my departure. On regaining the deck, the hurry of the business was over. The contraband cargo had been replaced by stone ballast; for, by previous arrangement, each boat brought a quantity of *shingle* from the beach, and hence the smuggler was already in trim and ready to stand out for sea.

This notorious vessel was considered in size and sailing superior to any of a similar class, and her voyages had been numerous and successful. Her armament was formidable; sixteen heavy carronades were extended along the deck, with two long brass guns of a smaller calibre, and every other appurtenance of war was in perfect efficiency. But the most striking object was her ferocious-looking, but magnificent crew; they seemed only formed for "the battle and the breeze," and well justified their wild commander's boast, "that he could thresh any cruiser of his own size, and land his cargo in six hours afterwards."

We left the vessel—and, to judge by the cags and cases stowed away in the gig, my cousin had not been forgotten in the general distribution. The outlaw stood upon a carronade, and waved his hand as we pulled from the ship's side; and in a short time set his headsails, and stood off to sea with the ebb-tide and a spanking breeze, which carried him out of sight directly.

This was fated to be the last landing of *The Jane*, and the last exploit of her commander; she foundered on her next voyage, and every person on board perished with the vessel.*

* *The Jane* went down in a tremendous gale off the north-west coast of Ireland. Her consort, *The Blue-eyed Maid*, witnessed the melancholy event, without being able to render any assistance.

We had nearly reached the bar, when we observed a large sailing-boat strike on the tail of Carrig-a-boddagh, and as the tide was falling fast, she was in momentary danger of falling over. Every exertion of the crew to get her off was ineffectual; and on our nearer approach, they evinced such unequivocal symptoms of inebriety as accounted for the disaster. A solitary passenger was on board, who appeared in desperate alarm; and at his own earnest solicitation, we received him and his personal effects, which were extremely limited, into our boat. The crew remained with the hooker, which they calculated upon floating off the following tide.

I was much struck with the appearance of the stranger. His voice and bearing told that he was not indigenous to the soil: low in stature, delicate in form, with a timid and suspicious bearing, I was greatly puzzled to account for his being a passenger in a Connemara fishing-boat. Although nervous as a woman, before we reached the pier I had tranquillized him so far as to find out generally that he had left the Galway coast in the expectation of being landed on the shores of Sligo; but that the crew, having boarded the smuggler, managed to get gloriously drunk, and, diverging totally from their course, ran the hooker on a reef from which they should have been several leagues distant.

The stranger was an Englishman. He met from my kinsman a hospitable reception—and the colonel and I united our attentions, and in a great degree restored his confidence. Nothing, however, could persuade him that the hooker had not been run designedly upon the rock, and that he and his travelling-bag would have been victimized, by what he termed "desperate pirates," but for our seasonable rescue. My cousin smiled. "The conduct of the drunken scoundrels," he said, "was unpardonable; but he doubted whether they harboured those nefarious designs. Strangers were frequently led astray by appearances, and it was no uncommon thing for travellers to suffer unnecessary alarm from groundless causes." And he related an anecdote of a gentleman being put in fear and terror, in a neighbouring county, by mistaking *a fish* for *a weapon*.

"Soon after the rebellion of ninety-eight, an English merchant was necessitated by urgent business to visit the kingdom of Connaught. Having provided himself with a servant who professed an acquaintance with the language of the country, he made his will, and took a place in the Westport mail. He reached the post-town of ——— in safety, and from it proceeded to cross that wild and picturesque mountain-chain, which bounds the beautiful shores of Lough Corrib.

"It was late in autumn: the weather had been wet, and owing to the difficulty of the bridle-roads, the traveller was benighted some miles' distance from the house that he had calculated upon reaching. Unable to proceed farther, he reluctantly took up his quarters at a *sheebiene-house*. It was but a sorry caravansara—but nothing could surpass the apparent kindness of the family. Supper was prepared; the best bed was sheeted, and when the belated stranger had sufficiently refreshed himself, he was conducted to an inner room, where, at his own request, the servant was also accommodated with a pallet.

"Yet, notwithstanding the marked civility of the family, the stranger could not overcome a secret apprehension of impending danger. It was a wild place—a wilder family; he feared that treachery lurked underneath this studied kindness; and, as he tossed upon his restless bed, he listened with painful anxiety to every sound. Midnight came; the outer door was opened cautiously—several men entered the kitchen with stealthy pace—they conversed in their native language, his name was mentioned, and himself was beyond doubt the subject of this nocturnal *conversazione*. Crawling in an agony of apprehension to the pallet where his attendant lay, he awoke the sleeper, intimated his suspicions in a whisper, and desired him to report faithfully the midnight colloquy in the outer chamber.

"'What's that they say?' quoth the traveller.

"'They want another pint, for they had not such a prize for the last twelvemonth.'

"'That's me!' groaned the querist.

"'They have *five pikes* already, and expect more before morning,' continued the valet.

"'Truculent scoundrels!'

"'The largest is intended for yourself.'

"'Lord defend me!' ejaculated the stranger.

"'They wonder if you are sleeping.'

"'Cold-blooded monsters! they want to despatch us quietly.'

"'The owner swears that nobody shall enter this room till morning.'

"'Ay, then they will have daylight and no difficulty.'

"'And now he urges them to go to bed.'

"'Heaven grant they may! for then, escape from this den of murder might be possible.'

"Listening with a beating heart until unequivocal symptoms of deep sleep were heard from the kitchen, the unhappy Englishman, leaving his effects to fortune, crawled through the window half dressed, and, with a world of trouble and perilous adventure, managed early next morning to reach his original place of destination.

"Never, however, was man more mortified than he when he related his fearful story. His tale was frequently interrupted by a laugh, which *politesse* vainly endeavoured to control.

"'Zounds!' cried the irritated Englishman, no longer able to conceal his rage, 'is my throat so valueless, that its cutting should merely raise a horse-laugh?'

"'My dear friend,' replied the host, 'you must excuse me—it is so funny, I cannot, for the life of me, be serious. The cause of all your fears lies quietly in the outer hall. Come, you shall judge upon what good grounds you absconded through a window, and skirmished half the night over hill and dale, with but the nether portion of your habiliments.'

"As he spoke, he uncovered a large basket, and pointed to a huge pike of some thirty pounds' weight, which was coiled around the bottom.

"'The stormy weather,' continued the host, 'having interrupted our supply of sea-fish, the peasants who alarmed you had been setting night-lines for your especial benefit. The *peika more*,* which you heard devoted to

* The large pike.

your services in the sheebiene-house, was not an instrument of destruction, but, as you shall admit at six o'clock, as good a white fish as ever true Catholics, like you and I, were doomed wherewithal to mortify the flesh upon a blessed Friday.'"

"The stranger smiled.

"'I may have wronged my late companions,' he said, 'but I have of late been under such constant and painful excitement, that I often wonder that reason held her seat. I have this evening not only been delivered from considerable danger, but I have fallen most unexpectedly upon persons and a place which, on this remote coast, and among these wild hills, appear miraculous. Your accents are different from those I have lately listened to; and could I but find courage to tell my story, you would own that I have lately undergone sufficient trials to unnerve a stouter frame than this feeble one of mine.'"

After some time, the stranger felt the cheering effects of my kinsman's claret, and in a strain which might be termed serio-comic, he thus narrated his story.

MEMOIR OF A GENTLEMAN WHO WOULD NOT DO FOR GALWAY.

"I AM descended from a line of traders, and by birth as genuine a cockney as ever listened to Bow-bells. My mother's nonage was passed in St. Mary Axe, and my father was a dry-salter in Tooley-street. He was third of the same name that there had dwelt and prospered. They were a thrifty and punctilious race; and it was a family boast, that for seventy years, a bill bearing the acceptance of Daniel Dawkins has never been in the hands of the notary. There is virtue in a good name, 'tis said, and theirs was current for ten thousand.

"I was an only child, and from the cradle evinced an indolent and dreamy temperature, which was ill adapted to withstand the worry of trade, and all the annoyances entailed on traffic. I hated trouble; hardly knew the difference between pearlashes and pearl-barley; could never comprehend tare-and-trett, and had, moreover, literary propensities. How one in whose veins the blood of the Dawkins circulated could be so deplorably uncommercial is a puzzle; but I was, I suppose, 'foredoomed my father's soul to cross,' and an unhappy tutor ruined me beyond recovery.

"My Gamaliel was a Scotch gentleman of unblemished lineage, remarkable for soiled linen and classical research, who had emigrated from a highland valley with an unpronounceable name, to hold a secondary situation in a city academy, where the progeny of Love-lane and Little Britain received the rudiments of polite letters. The extra hours of the gifted Celt were, for the consideration of ten pounds' annual fee, 'to be paid quarterly, and in advance,' devoted to my accomplishments. Never had man a more profound contempt for trade and traders than he at whose feet I was indoctrinated. He turned his nose up at the wealthiest grocer in the ward; and was barely civil to a tobacconist who had a villa at

Pentonville, and was, moreover, first favourite for an aldermanic gown. Such delinquency could not be overlooked, and for his heretical opinions touching commerce, he was eventually ejected from Tooley-street. But, alas! the mischief was done—the seed was already sown—and, as after-experience proved, none of it had fallen upon the wayside.

"'In brevity I shall emulate the noble Roman,' quoth Jack Falstaff; and so shall I, so far as the autobiography of my youth is concerned. I abominated business—was an admirer of the Corsair and Lalla Rookh—was generally given to inflammatory poetry—wrote fugitive pieces, and vainly endeavoured to get them a corner in the periodicals—quarrelled with my parents—was supported in my rebellion by a romantic aunt—and when my disinheritance was actually in legal train, was saved by my parents quitting this world of care, which they did within one short month, by the agency of a typhus fever and two physicians.

"Thus was I thrown upon the world at two-and-twenty, with thirty thousand pounds. Need I say that I abjured business instanter, and that the honoured name of Dawkins disappeared from the list of dry-salters? For some years, none led a more peaceful and literary life; and though this may appear a solecism, nevertheless it is positively true. The rejection of my early *fugitives* had chilled the metrical outbreakings of my imagination. I had almost Cowper's sensibility—the *lethalis arundo*, as my Scotch tutor would term it, was deep within my bosom—I swore I would never lucubrate again; never again perpetrate a stanza; and, like Mr. Daniel O'Connell's, I presume that my vow was duly registered in heaven.

"This sunny portion of my life was, alas! but transitory. Mine, sir, is a tragic tale. I date the origin of my misfortunes on board a Margate steamer, and this melancholy epoch I shudder to recall. Was there no tutelary sprite, no suspicious spinster, to whisper a cautionary advice? No; without a single fear, I embarked in the Nereid steamer; and, as the papers stated, 'left the

Tower-stairs with a select party, and a band of music,' on Friday, the — of June, 182—.

"I must here observe, that my blue-stocking aunt, who had actually come out in Leadenhall-street with one small and admired volume, called 'Pedrilla, a Tale of Passion,' had been latterly urgent with me to enter into matrimony. 'Something told her,' she would say, 'that the name of Dawkins was not doomed to be forgotten, like that of Wood, and Birch, and Bagster:—men of tarts and turpentine might perish; while, could I but procure a talented companion, could I but unite myself to a congenial soul, God knows what the result would prove!—a gifted progeny might honour me with their paternity; little Popes and diminutive Landons would thus be given to the world, fated to be glorious in their maturity, and lisping in numbers, from their very cots.'

"The company on board the Nereid were generally known to me. They were exclusively *Eastern;* and there were beauties from the Minories, and nice men from Bishopsgate Within and Without. I was no swain, and as anti-gallican in my dancing as Bob Acres. The old women admitted, that though a good catch, I had no spirit: the young ones 'admired the money, but disliked the man;' and as I did not form one of the *Coriphées*, who were quadrilling upon the quarter-deck, I was likely enough to be left to meditative solitude.

"But there was another person who appeared to hold no communion with the company. One lady seemed a stranger to the rest. Accident placed me beside her, and thus she became more intimately my *compagnon du voyage.*

"She was certainly a fine-looking woman: her face was comely, but somewhat coarse; her hair and brows black as the raven's plumage, her nose rather too marked for a woman's—but then her waist and legs were unexceptionable. She evidently possessed a sufficiency of self-command; no *mauvaise honte*, no feminine timidity oppressed her. She looked bravely around, as if she would assert a superiority; and accepted my civilities graciously, it is true, but with the air and dignity of a duchess. She was from the start no favourite with the

company, and there was no inclination evidenced by any of her own sex to make approaches to familiarity. The cockney beaus looked upon her as a fine, but formidable animal; and to me, unworthy as I was, the honour of being *cavalier serviente* was conceded without a contest. Indeed, at dinner, my fair friend proved herself too edged a tool for civic wit to touch upon. When, with ultra-elegance, an auctioneer, whose assurance was undeniable, pressed 'the *Hirish* lady to *teest* a roast *fole*,' she obliterated the accomplished appraiser, by brusquely replying 'that no earthly consideration could induce her to eat *horse-flesh*.'

"And yet to this woman I was irresistibly attracted. I sat beside her on the deck, and I ministered to her coffee-cup; and when the Nereid disembarked her crowd, and a stout, red-whiskered, do-no-good-looking gentleman presented himself upon the chain-pier, and claimed his 'gentle cousin,' a pang of agony shot across my breast, and for the first time I felt the curse of jealousy. And yet, God knows, she was not the person from whom 'little Popes' might be expected; her tender pledges would be better qualified for rangers and riflemen than denizens of the world of letters. But marriage is decreed elsewhere, and mine had been already *booked*.

"'What is in a name?' observed somebody. I assert, every thing. Will anybody deny that 'Drusilla O'Shaughnessey' was not sufficient to alarm any but a Shannonite? Such was the appellative of the lady, while her honoured kinsman favoured me with an embossed card, on which was fairly engraven, 'Mr. Marc Antony Burke Bodkin, Ballybroney-House.'

"On minor matters I will not dilate. It appeared that Miss Drusilla O'Shaughnessey had come to London, in hopeless search after a legacy she expected in right of her great uncle, Field-marshal O'Toole; that the field-marshal's effects were undiscoverable, and no available assets could be traced beyond certain old swords and battered snuff-boxes; and consequently Drusilla, who had been an heiress in expectancy, was sadly chagrined. Furthermore it appeared that Mr. Marc Antony Bodkin

formed her escort from Connemara, and, being a 'loose gentleman,'* and a loving cousin, he 'bore her company.'

"If ever the course of love ran smooth, which I sincerely disbelieve, mine was not the one. I shall not attempt a description of the progress of my *affaire du cœur;* for I suspect that I was the wooed one, and that Drusilla had marked me for her own, and Marc Antony aided and abetted. He, good easy gentleman, was formed for Cupid's embassies. He 'could interpret between you and your love,' as Hamlet says; and to one with my sensibilities, his services were worth a Jew's eye. If woman ever possessed the cardinal virtues united, that person was Drusilla. She was what Marc called 'the soul of honour;' yet she had her weak points, and he hinted darkly that myself had found favour in her sight. As a thing of course, I muttered a handsome acknowledgment; a rejoinder was promptly returned, *per* same conveyance, as my father would have said—and before six days I was made the happiest of men, and levanted to Gretna with the lady of my love, and formally attended by that *fidus Achates*, Marc Antony Bodkin.

"What a whirligig world this is! I recollect well the evening before the indissoluble knot was tied, when I strolled into the little garden at Newark. My thoughts were 'big with future bliss,' and my path of life, as I opined, strewed knee-deep with roses of perennial blossom. I heard voices in the summer-house,—these were my loved one's and her relative's. To use his own *parlance*, the latter, in the joy of his heart, had taken a sufficiency of wine 'to smother a priest; and as the conversation was interesting to the parties, and mine was not the stride of a warrior, my approach was not discovered by either. The conclave, however, had terminated, and though but the parting observation reached me, it is too faithfully chronicled on my memory to be forgotten—*The*

* No attempt is made here to insinuate aught against the morality of Miss O'Shaughnessy's protector. "A loose gentleman," in the common *parlance* of the kingdom of Connaught, meaneth simply a gentleman who has nothing to do; and nineteen out of twenty of the aristocracy of that truly independent country may be thus honourably classed.—Ed.

devil is an ommadawn, no doubt; but he has money *galore*, and we'll make him do in Galway!'—As he spoke, they rose, and passed into the house without observing me.

"What the observation of Marc Antony meant, I could not for the life of me comprehend. Part of it was spoken, too, in an unknown tongue. Was *I* the devil? and what was an *ommadawn*? Dark doubts crossed my mind; but they vanished, for Drusilla was more gracious than ever, and Marc Antony squeezed my hand at parting, and assured me, as well as he could articulate after six tumblers of hot *Farintosh*, 'that I was a lucky man, and Drusilla a woman in ten thousand.'

"Well, the knot was tied, and but for the *éclat* of the thing, the ceremony might have been as safely solemnized at Margate. On the lady's side, the property was strictly *personal*. Her claim upon the estates of the defunct field-marshal was never since established, for the properties of that distinguished commander could never be localized. Marc Antony had been a borrower from the first hour of our intimacy; and on the morning of her marriage, Drusilla, I have reason to believe, was not mistress of ten pounds—but then, she was a treasure in herself, and so swore Marc Antony.

"The private history of a honeymoon I leave to be narrated by those who have found that haven of bliss which I had pictured, but never realized. If racketing night and day over every quarter of the metropolis, with the thermometer steady at 90; if skirmishing from Kensington to the Haymarket, and thence to Astley's and Vauxhall, with frequent excursions to those suburban hotels infested by high-spirited apprentices, 'and maids who love the moon;'—if this be pleasure, I had no reason to repine. In these affairs 'our loving cousin' was an absolute dictator, and against his decrees there was no appeal. To me, a quiet and nervous gentleman, Marc's arrangements were detestable. What he called life, was death to me—his ideas of pleasure were formed on the *keep-moving* plan—and to sleep a second night in the same place would be, according to his theories, an atrocity. I found myself sinking under this excessive happiness; and when I ventured a gentle protest against

being whirled off in a thunderstorm from the 'Star and Garter' to the 'Greyhound,' I received a cross fire that silenced me effectually. From that period I submitted without a murmur; my days were numbered; another month like that entitled the honey-one, would consign me to my fathers; the last of the Dawkinses would vanish from among men, and a mural monument in Saint Saviour's record my years and virtues. But accident saved my life, though it annihilated my property.

"Years before I led Drusilla to the altar, a Connemara estate, which had belonged to her progenitors, and had been ruined in succession by the respective lords, was utterly demolished by a gentleman whom she termed 'her lamented father.' The property had been in chancery for half a century, and advertised for sale beyond the memory of man; but as it was overloaded with every species of encumbrance, no one in his senses would have accepted the fee-simple as a gift. But my wife had determined that Castle Toole should be redeemed, and rise once more, phœnix-like, from its embarassments. It owed, she admitted, more than it was worth twice told —but then, *sure*, it was the family property. *There*, for four centuries, O'Tooles had died, and O'Shaughnesseys been born; and if she could only persuade me to repurchase it with my wealth, she would be the first lady in the barony. To Marc Antony this project was enchanting. Ballybroney had been roofless for the last twenty years, that being about the period when the last of the "dirty acres," which had once appertained to the mansion, had slipped from the fingers of the Bodkins; therefore, to establish himself for Castle Toole, would suit my kinsman to a hair. In short, the battery was unmasked; and whether overpersuaded by the eloquence of my wife, the arguments of her cousin, or driven to desperation by a life of pleasure, I consented in due time; and having accompanied my honoured counsellors to Dublin, found no competitor for Castle Toole—proposed for the same—paid a large sum of money, and was declared by the legal functionaries a gentleman of estate, and that too in Connemara.

"In my eyes, the value of the purchase was not en-

hanced by a personal investigation. It had its capabilities, it is true; the house being a ruin, might be repaired; and as the lands were in their primeval state, it was possible to reclaim them. Still, when one looked at a huge dismantled building of that mixed class in architecture between a fortalice and a dwelling-house, with grey-flagged roof, lofty chimneys, embattled parapets, and glassless windows, it was ill calculated to encourage an English speculator in Irish estates. On every side a boundless expanse of barren moorland was visible, with an insulated portion of green surface on which the castle stood, and a few straggling trees remained from what had once been a noble oak wood. That some savage beauty did exist in wild highlands, a fine river, and an extensive lake, is certain; but to me, the scenery and the place was dreary and disheartening. In vain, therefore, did my friend Marc Antony dilate upon its advantages. The river boasted the best salmon-fishing in the country—What was it to me, who had never angled for a gudgeon? The mountains abounded with grouse—Who but a native could escalade them? The bogs were celebrated for game—And would I devote myself, like another Decius, to be ingulfed, for all the wild ducks that ever wore a wing? But then *the Blazers* were only a few miles distant, and their favourite fixture was on the estate. Really the proximity of that redoubted body produced a cold perspiration when I heard it. *The Blazers!* the most sanguinary fox-club in Connaught,—a gang who would literally devastate the country, if it did not please Heaven to thin their numbers annually by broken necks and accidents from pistol bullets. Yet, with me, the Rubicon was crossed—Castle Toole was mine with all its imperfections, and I determined to exert my philosophy to endure, what it was impossible to undo.

"To restore the decayed glories of the mansion, you may well imagine, was a work of trouble and expense. It was done, and Drusilla slept again under the roof-tree of her progenitors. Hitherto I had indulged her fancies without murmuring, and some of them were superlatively absurd. I hoped, and believed, that when the hurry of re-establishing the ruin I had been fool enough to pur-

chase was over, the worry and confusion of my unhappy life would terminate. While the repairs proceeded, we resided in a small house in a neighbouring village, and were not much annoyed by unwelcome visiters. But no sooner was the castle completed—and the apartments reported habitable, than the country for fifty miles round complotted, as I verily believe, to inundate us with their company. A sort of *saturnalia*, called the house-warming, I thought destined to continue for ever; and after having endured a purgatorial state for several weeks, and the tumult and vulgar dissipation had abated, swarms of relations to the third and fourth generation of those that loved us, kept dropping in, in what they termed *the quiet friendly way*, until 'the good house Money-glass'* was outstripped in hospitality by my devoted mansion. Although ten long miles from a post-town, we were never secure from an inroad. Men who bore the most remote affinity to the families of O'Shaughnessey or O'Toole, deserted the corners of the earth to spoliate the larder; and persons who, during the course of their natural lives, had never before touched fishing-rod or fowling-piece, now borrowed them 'for the nonce,' and deemed it a good and sufficient apology for living on me for a fortnight. Pedlers abandoned their accustomed routes; friars diverged a score of miles to take us on "the mission;" pipers infested the premises; and even deserters honoured me with a passing call, 'for the house had such a name.' All and every calculated on that cursed *ceade fealteagh*. An eternal stream of the idle and dissipated filled the house—the kitchen fire, like the flame of Vesta, was never permitted to subside—and a host of locusts devoured my property. I lived and submitted, and yet had the consolation to know that I was the most unpopular being in the province. I was usually described as a 'dry devil,' or a *dark*,† 'dirty little man;' while upon Drusilla blessings rained, and she was admitted to be 'the best sowl that ever laid leg below mahogany.

* Appendix, No. XVII.

† "Dark," in the kingdom of Connaught, is frequently used synonymously with "unsocial."

"I was weary of this state. Marc Antony was in regular possession of an apartment, which was duly termed by the servants 'Mr. Bodkin's room.' Summer passed, and so did autumn and its host of grouse shooters. I foolishly hoped that, considering the locality of Castle Toole, my locusts would vanish with the butterflies; but the only difference a rainy day made was, that the visiter who arrived never dreamed of departing till the morrow, and the number by no means abated. Some heavy bills came in, and I seized that opportunity of remonstrating with Drusilla. I told her my health was breaking; my fortune unequal to my expenses; that common prudence required a certain limitation to our irregular hospitality: hinted that, though an occasional visit from Mr. Marc Antony Bodkin would be agreeable, yet that an everlasting abode would rather be a bore. I would have continued, but my lady had listened, she thought, too long already. She fired at the very idea of retrenchment; and as to Mr. Marc Antony Bodkin, we were, it appeared, too much honoured by his society. He, a third cousin of Clanricarde, condescended to take my place, and entertain my company. He rode my horse and drank my wine, neither of which feats, as she opined, nature had designed me for doing in proper person; in short, by Herculean efforts on his part, he enabled me to hold my place among gentlefolk. As to the paltry consideration of his residence, what was it? 'God be with the time, when, as her 'lamented father' said, a stranger remained for eighteen months in Castle Toole, and would probably have lived and died there, but that his wife discovered him, and forced the truant to abdicate; and yet,' she added, proudly, 'none could tell whether he was from Wales or Enniskillen; and some believed his name was *Hamerton*, while others asserted it was *Macintosh*. But,' as she concluded, 'when her kinsman Mr. Bodkin was turned out, it was time for her to provide a residence,' and she flung from the room like a Bacchante, making door and window shiver.

"Well, sir, you may pity or despise me as you will; from that day my wife assumed the absolute mastery, and

I calmly submitted. The house was now a scene of wild and unrestricted extravagance. Tenants ran away, cattle were depreciated, and worse still, claims made upon the property that had never been foreseen, and in nine months I was engaged in as many law-suits. I must have sunk beneath these calamities, but a domestic event gave a new turn to my hopes. No heir had yet been promised, when happily it was whispered that this blessing was not an impossibility. Day after day confirmed the happy news, till at last it was regularly announced in the Connaught Journal, 'that Mrs. Dawkins, of Castle Toole, was as ladies wish to be who love their lords.'

"Of course, from that moment, any contradiction would have been death to my dear Drusilla. She never reigned lady-paramount till now, and her will was absolute. Relatives trooped down in scores, and Marc Antony was doubly cherished. Notwithstanding my nerves thrilled at their arrival, *the Blazers* were honourably feasted; and, at the especial request of Mrs. Dawkins, on that occasion I determined to make a character. I really was half a hero; presided at the head of my own table like its master, gave divers bumper toasts, and sat out the evening until I was fairly *hors du combat*, and tumbled from the chair. Drunk as I was, I recollected clearly all that passed. As but a couple of bottles a man had been then discussed, my early fall appeared to create a sensation. 'Is it a fit he has?' inquired an undersized gentleman with an efflorescent nose, who had been pointed out to me as a six-bottle customer. 'Phoo!' replied my loving cousin, 'the man has no more bottom than a chicken. Lift him; he has a good heart, but a weak head. *He'll never do for Galway!* But, come, lads,' and Marc hopped over my body, as I was being taken up by the servants, 'I'll give you that *top-sawyer*, his wife, and long may she wear the breeches!' It was gratifying to find that the toast was generally admired, for the very attendants that 'bore the corpse along,' stopped at the door, and shouted 'hip, hip, hurra!' from the staircase.

"Every day from this period I became more unhappy

and contemptible. My blue-stocking aunt, who, for reasons unnecessary to explain, had been since my marriage totally estranged, was now officially informed that the name of Dawkins would be continued. She had the true leaven of family affection in her, and my past neglect was pardoned, and the kindest letter returned to my communication. One passage of her epistle ran thus—'Though I felt acutely at your selecting a wife without even consulting one of whose attachment you must be well convinced, I forgive all, from the personal description you give of your consort. May the heir of our line be like his mother, is my prayer! For, oh, Daniel, my predilection for dark beauty is the same, and my conviction unalterable, that even

——Genius a dead loss is,
Without dark brows and long proboscis.'

"Poor woman! no wonder she thus considered: a sergeant in the Guards, with a countenance of the true Kemble character, had, in early life, almost turned her brain; and Tooley-street was kept in an uproar, until he was fortunately drafted off to join the Duke of York upon the Continent, and there, in due time, rested in the bed of glory.

"It is a lamentable thing for a man of sensibility to wed a woman whose conduct he considers irreconcileable to his ideas of what female delicacy demands—and such was my case. Drusilla not only assumed the mastery within doors, but she extended her sway to the farm and the horses. One day at the head of a hundred paupers, she was planting trees; the next, with Marc Antony Bodkin, making a radical reform in the stables. On these occasions, arrayed in a man's hat, with her limbs cased in Hessian boots, she looked, as Tom the Devil said, 'blasted knowing.' I occasionally was permitted to attend, as a sort of travelling conveniency to hang her cloak upon; and I never returned without suffering some indignity from strangers, or personal disrespect from herself. It was death to me to hear her addressed in the coarse language of the stable, and allusions made to her altered figure, which appeared too

vulgar even for the servants' hall; and when a fellow of forbidding countenance, with a scarlet coat and white unmentionables, whom the rest of the gang distinguished as 'Long Lanty,' crooked up the bottom of her dress with his hunting-whip, exclaiming, 'Bone and sinew, by the Holy! what a leg for a boot!' I could have knocked the ruffian down, had I been able, although for the exploit I should be taxed with my false delicacy, and the usual wind-up, '*It will never do for Galway!*'

"Shy from my cradle, and accustomed to city formality, I was not likely to become at once habituated to Irish manners. But in Connaught there was laxity of form—a free-and-easy system of society, that exceeded all belief, and to a distant person like me was intolerable. People on a half-hour's acquaintance called you by your Christian name; and men whom you had never even heard of, rode to your door, and told you coolly they 'would stay a fortnight.' Introductions in Connemara, I believe, are reckoned among the works of supererogation. If I took a quiet ride, expecting upon my return to meet none at dinner but my wife and the eternal Marc Antony, I probably found half a score already seated at the table, and might learn the appellatives of perhaps a couple of the gang, by the announcement of 'Mr. Dawkins, Tom the Devil,' 'Mr. Dawkins, Smashall Sweeney.'

"I remember upon the day on which I was so fortunate as to make the acquaintance of the above gentlemen, in the course of the evening they differed about the colour of a race-horse, and, after bandying mutual civilities, concluded by interchanging the lie direct and a full decanter. The latter having grazed my head, induced me to abscond immediately; and when I recorded to my loving helpmate the narrow escape from demolition I had just experienced, instead of tender alarm and connubial sympathy, her countenance betrayed irrepressible disappointment and surprise. 'And have you, Mr. Dawkins, really deserted your company, and that too at a period when two gentlemen had disagreed? Do return immediately. Such inhospitality, I assure you, *will never do for Galway.*' I did return; but I had my revenge, and dearly it cost me, though neither of the

rascals were shot upon my lawn. *Smashall* rode off my lady's favourite mare in mistake, and sent her back next morning with a pair of broken knees—and *Tom the Devil* set fire to his bed-curtains the same night, and nothing but a miracle saved the house. Every thing in the apartment, however, was consumed or rendered unserviceable.

"As I became more intimate with my wife's relatives, I found that nothing but the lamp of Aladdin would meet their multifarious demands. Castle Toole, like the cave of Abdullam, was the certain refuge of all gentlemen who happened to be in debt and difficulty. All that came here were, what is called in Connemara, 'upon the borrowing hand;' and when the sum appeared too large to be forthcoming in cash, nothing could be more accommodating than their overtures,—They would make my acceptance answer; they would *wish* it at sixty-one days; but *if it obliged me particularly*, they could contrive to extend it to three months. It was, of course, a matter of mere form; it would be regularly provided for; it would, 'upon honour!' If, after this, I hesitated, I did it on personal responsibility; and sooner than be perforated upon my own lawn, I actually suffered myself to be made liable for some hundreds. When I complained bitterly of these spoliations to my wife, I received the usual comfort, 'Dear me, how narrow your ideas are! If my uncle Ulic had asked you for the money, it would have been a different affair. And so, all he wants is the accommodation of your name! Ah! if my 'lamented father' was alive, how he would be astonished! Many a time he and poor Ulic assisted each other. Indeed, the dear old man used to mention an amusing anecdote. They once purchased a pipe of port, paid for it with a two months' bill, and when the time expired, the wine was drunk, and the note protested. They had consumed so much from the wood, that it was not worth while to bottle the remainder. Do, Mr. Dawkins, at once oblige my uncle Ulic. Get rid of these narrow ideas. Believe me, *they will never do for Galway.*'

"There was another thing that added to my miseries, and yet to my honoured helpmate it was a subject of un-

measured pride. It so happened, that the geographical position of my ill omened estate was nearly on the boundaries of Galway and Mayo—counties no less remarkable for their extent, than the truculent disposition of the inhabitants. From time immemorial, my lawn was the chosen *fixture* for determining affairs of honour; and hence, more blood had been shed there than on any similar spot in Christendom. If the civil authorities were so ungentlemanly as to interrupt the combatants, the latter merely crossed the adjacent bridge, and finished the affair to their satisfaction. It is right, however, to say, that the magistracy seldom interfered; and if a functionary was forced out by some mean-spirited relative, though the fears of the lord-chancellor might deter him from refusing his intervention, he still contrived to miss the road, cast the shoe, be run away with, or meet some happy casualty, that one of the parties might be defunct, and the survivor in a place of safety, before he, the justice, appeared upon the battle-ground. Hence, not a week elapsed but my nerves were tortured by the arrival of a *shooting-party*, and probably further agonized by hearing Mr. Bodkin hallooing to the butler, 'Michael, (*sotto voce,*) *devil speed ye, Michael!* the *mistress* desires ye to keep back dinner till the gentlemen have done, and to present her compliments, and say that she expects the company of the survivor.'

"All this was horrible to me;—in the evening to be suddenly disturbed with pop! pop! and an outcry; or awakened before daylight by my lady's maid opening the curtains with a curtsey, to know 'where the dead man would be *stritched.*' It was, moreover, a desperate tax upon my finances: vagabonds, known and unknown, lay for weeks together in my house, while their broken bones were being reunited—not a month passed but there was some dying man in the state-room—doctors came and went as regularly as the post-boy—and once in each quarter, the coroner,* if he had any luck, impanelled a jury in our hall.

* In Connaught this useful officer is paid by the job, and the number with which he occasionally *debits* the county is surprising.

"Nor were we less tormented with *the Blazers*. We always had a lame horse or two in the stables; and from the time cub-hunting commenced, till the season ended, of that redoubted community who hazard

——'Neck and spine,
Which rural gentlemen call sport divine,'

we never boasted fewer than a couple on the sick-list. Once, when an inquest was holding in the house, *a Blazer* in the best bedroom, a dying earth-stopper in the gate-house, and four disabled horses 'at rack and manger,' I insinuated what a nuisance it was to have one's house made a '*morgue*,' and the offices an hospital.—'Do, Mr. Dawkins, have done,' exclaimed my lady—'if you have no humanity, pray conceal it. Believe me, your feelings *will never do for Galway*.'

"But Drusilla had her reward. What though we kept a lazaretto for lame horses, and a general wake-house for gentlemen of honour who left the world without sufficient assets to procure a grave; our lights were not hidden, nor our charities unrecorded. There was not a man shot, or an arm broken, but my lady wife was dragged neck and crop into the columns of the Connaught Journal—as for example.

"'THE LATE CAPTAIN MACNAB.—*Further particulars*.—When the lamented gentleman fell, his second, Mr. Peter Brannick, raised the body in his arms. Life, however, was totally extinct, as the ball had fractured the fifth rib, and passed directly through the pericardium. In its transit, the fatal bullet shattered a portable tobacco-pipe which the deceased invariably carried in his right waist-coat-pocket. The body was immediately removed upon a door to Castle Toole, where every attention to the remains of a gallant soldier was given by the accomplished mistress. Indeed it is but right to say, that this estimable lady superintended in person the laying out of the corpse. At midnight three friars from Ballyhownis, and a number of the resident clergy attended, and a solemn high mass was celebrated in the great hall. The reverend gentlemen employed upon this melancholy occasion have expressed their deep sense of the urbanity of the lady of the mansion.

"'We understand that, at the especial request of Mrs. Dawkins, the body will remain in state at Castle Toole, until it is removed to its last resting-place, the family burying-ground at Carrick Nab.'—*Connaught Journal.*

"'The friends and relatives of Mr. Cornelius Coolaghan will be delighted to hear that he has been pronounced convalescent by Dr. M'Greal. A mistake has crept into the papers, stating that the accident was occasioned by his gray mare, Miss Magaraghan, falling at a six-feet wall. The fact was, that the injury occurred in attempting to ride in and out of the pound of Ballymacraken, for a bet of ten pounds. As the village inn was not deemed sufficiently quiet, Mr. C. C. was carried to the hospitable mansion of Castle Toole. It is needless to add, that every care was bestowed upon the sufferer by the elegant proprietress. Indeed, few of the gentler sex so eminently combine the charms and amiabilities of the beautiful Mrs. Dawkins.'—*Ibid.*

"Well, sir, I submitted to my fate with more than mortal fortitude. I saw that in rashly marrying one in taste, feeling, and sentiment so totally my opposite, I had wrecked my happiness for ever, and that I must submit. My pride would sometimes fire at the slights I suffered from my very underlings, and the cool contempt of those locusts who lived only upon my bounty. I was reduced to utter dependency, and yet I never murmured a remonstrance. Presently my wife took possession of my banker's book;—yet I did not rebel—for my nerves were weak, my spirit humble;—fate made my own conduct punish me, and I had philosophy to bear it patiently. But one thing reconciled me to much misery—it was a darling hope—a cherished fancy—this was left when all besides had fled, and I clung to it with the tenacity of a wretch who seizes the reed to support him while he drowns. That hope, that sole dependance, was in my unborn child; on that being haply I might lavish my love:—and when nothing else remained on earth whereon to rest my affections, I turned to a visionary thing, a creature not in existence as an object on which to fix my heart. You smile; but ah, sirs, remember I had not nerves and feelings like the multitude. I am a

poor helpless wretch, unfitted to withstand the villany of mankind, and struggle through a world where the boldest will often blench, and the wisest hold their course with difficulty."

He became deeply agitated, and though, poor fellow, I had laughed heartily at the faithful picture he gave, in the course of his narrative, of all concerned, I could not but respect his griefs. He soon continued—

"At times I felt a misgiving in my bosom, and pangs of jealousy tortured me. I saw much culpable familiarity between my wife and her relative; and for some trifling cause, she and I, for some time past, had not occupied the same apartment. Could she forget herself and me so far? Oh, no, no, she could not! She would not do a being like me, who submitted to her command, and sacrificed every thing to her fancy, so base, so cruel an injury! I never harmed a worm willingly; and surely she would not wrong one so totally her thrall—her worshipper, as I!

"I considered that between the parties there existed a near relationship, and national habits and early intimacy might warrant what was certainly indelicate, but still might not be criminal. God help me! At times my brain burned—my senses were almost wandering; and had this state of torture long continued, I must, ere now, have been the inmate of a madhouse.

"The time of her trial came, and at that awful hour, I am told, women like to have their husbands near them, for those they love can sometimes whisper hope, and rouse the drooping courage of the sufferer. But I was specially excluded from the chamber of the patient, although constant messages passed between the lady and her kinsman. The trial ended happily—a boy was born—the servants flocked round me to offer their rude congratulations: but the nurse cast on me such a look of mingled pity and contempt as almost struck me lifeless. I asked affectionately for my wife—I inquired tenderly for my child. 'It is a fine boy,' said a young, wild, light-hearted creature, the house-maid; 'it has the longest legs I ever saw; and, Holy Mary! its hair is as *red* as Lanty Driscoll's jacket!'—God of Heaven! *red hair*. It was killing

—murderous. Then was I the wretch my worst fears had whispered, and a child was born—*but not to me.*"

He paused, completely overcome. I felt my eyes moisten at the deep, though simple pathos of the story-teller. There was a sorrow, an agony, in his melancholy detail, that touched the heart more sensibly than calamities of deeper character and greater men.

After a short pause, he thus continued:

"The day the most eventful of my life, if my wedding one be excepted, at last arrived, and had it been nominated for my undergoing the extreme penalty of the law, it could not have brought more horror with it. I felt the fulness of my degradation. I was a miserable puppet, obliged to pretend a blindness to disgrace, of which my conviction was entire; and, automaton as I was considered, and little as my looks or feelings were consulted, the deep melancholy of my face did not escape my conscience-stricken partner. She became pale and agitated, while, with affected indifference of manner, she taxed me with rudeness to my company, and more especially to herself. 'What would the world say, if on this 'high festival,' when the heir of Castle Toole was to be presented to his relatives, I should appear liker a monk at a death-wake, than a happy parent? Lord! Mr. Dawkins, this moping is so unmanly. Here will be the O'Tooles and the O'Shaugnesseys, Blakes and Burkes, Bellews and Bodkins; they will feel it a personal insult. If you encourage these humours, I assure you, Mr. Dawkins, *you will never do for Galway.*' Before this jobation ended, carriage-wheels grated on the gravel, and men, women, and children commenced and continued pouring in, as if another deluge had begun, and Castle Toole was an ark of safety.

"While the house was crowded within, the space before it appeared to be in the possession of a numerous banditti. The tenants, of course, had flocked hither to do honour to the christening. For their refreshment a beeve was roasted whole, and beer and whiskey lavishly distributed. I never saw such a scene of waste and drunkenness before, although I had hitherto believed that my residence was the veriest *rack-rent* in the world. In every corner

pipers played, women danced, men drank, and swearing and love-making was awful. There, while dinner was being served, I had stolen forth to vent my agony unnoticed. I am not, sirs, gifted with that command of nerve which can exhibit hollow smiles while the bosom is inly bleeding. To affect gayety so foreign to my heart, I felt, would break it; but the desperate misery that I endured would spur the dullest soul to madness. I viewed the rude revelry with disgust. I was the master of the feast, but the savages barely recognised me. Generally they spoke in their native language; and though I did not exactly comprehend all they said, I heard enough to assure me of my utter insignificance in their rude estimate of character. Under a gate-pier, two old women were sitting; they did not notice me, and continued their discourse.

"'Ally *astore*—did ye see the child? They say it's the picture of Marc Bodkin.'

"'Whisht, ye divil!' was the rejoinder, as the crone proceeded with a chuckle; '*it has red hair*, any how; but, *Neil an skil a gau maun*,* and ye know best.'

"But the further humiliation of assisting at the ceremony was saved me. In the hurry consequent upon the general confusion, the post-bag was handed to me instead of my lady wife, who lately had managed all correspondence. Mechanically I opened the bag, and a letter, bearing the well known direction of my aunt, met my eye. That under circumstances it should have reached me, appeared miraculous; and, seizing an opportunity, I examined its contents in private. My kind relation had received my detail of misery: and in reply, she implored me to abandon the scene of my degradation, and share her fortune, which was more, she said, than sufficient for us both. My heart beat with conflicting emotions—all unworthy as she was, I could not bring myself to abandon Drusilla thus. I actually hesitated, when curiosity prompted me to peruse a letter which was addressed to her, and marked *immediate*. Its contents were these—

* Anglice, '*I have no skill in it*.'

"'DEAR MADAM,

"'I have by this post received the two writs as expected. I settled the *Ex.* against Mr. M. A. B., and he may come to town any time till further notice. With respect to those against Mr. Dawkins, it is as well to let things take their course. He is a gentleman of retired habits, and a little confinement, particularly *as he don't hunt*, will be quite immaterial. I received the bullocks, but, as cattle are down, there is a balance still due.

"'A Dublin wine-merchant has just handed me an *Ex.* for 613*l.*, and insists upon accompanying me to Castle Toole. I have therefore named *Wednesday*, on which day you will please have the *doors closed*. As the plaintiff may again be officious, I would recommend his being *ducked* when returning: and a city bailiff, whom you will know by his having a scorbutic face and yellow waistcoat, should for many reasons be corrected. Pray, however, take care *the boys* do not go too far, as manslaughter under the late act is now a transportable felony.

"'The sooner Mr. D. renders to prison the better. Tell your uncle Ulic I have returned *non est* to his *three last;* but he must not *show*. You can drop me a line by bearer when you wish Mr. D. to be arrested; and after we return *nulla bona* on Wednesday, I will come out and arrange matters generally.

"'Believe me, dear madam, truly yours,

"'JOHN GRADY,
"'Sub-sheriff, Galway.

"'Mrs. Dawkins,
"'Castle Toole.

"'P.S. What a blessing it is for poor Mr. Dawkins, that he has such a woman of business to manage his affairs. He is a well meaning-man, but *he'll never do for Galway.*

"'J. G.'

"Had I been ten times over the tame wretch I was, I could not be insensible to the deep treachery of this worthless woman, who had ruined my property, and would now incarcerate my person. In spite of remonstrances

upon its apparent inhospitality, I abandoned the 'impious feast,' and while my absence was neither missed nor regarded, I stole from the accursed spot, and by bribing a wandering stocking-man, was enabled to make my way to the coast, and procure a fishing-boat to place myself beyond the power of arrest. The same bad luck appeared to follow me; the drunkenness of the scoundrels threatened to interrupt my escape and even place my life in peril. From these mishaps you have delivered me, and by your prompt assistance I shall effect my retreat from a country I must ever recollect with horror. When I reach England, I will seek reparation for my injuries; and though all besides is gone, I shall at least endeavour to liberate myself from a worthless woman who abused a weak and too confiding husband.

"Alas! gentlemen, what a stream of misfortunes will sometimes originate in a trifle. A Margate steamer entailed a life of suffering upon me. My fortune vanished, my wife deceived me—laughed at by my friends, and ridiculed by my enemies; from all these complicated misfortunes, I have learned but one simple fact—Alas! '*That I should never do for Galway.*

LETTER XXXVIII.

Morning Alarm—Death of the Otter-killer—General Grief—Night Excursion—Herring-fishery—Our Reception—Beal Fires—The Wake—The Funeral—Anecdote of a Dog—A deserted House.

I SLEPT soundly; my servant found me still a-bed, when he came at his customary hour; as he unclosed the curtains I heard a hum of voices, and appearances of domestic hurry were visible; next moment the well-known *Currakeen*, whose celerity as a courier is truly remarkable, passed the window at a "killing pace." I found, upon inquiry, that the otter-killer was dying, and that "the runner" I had just observed had been despatched for Father Andrew.

The ancient retainer of an Irish family generally establishes a bond upon the affections of the wild household, that causes his loss to make a greater sensation than so humble an event might be supposed to occasion. Antony for half a century had been attached to this family. Three generations have passed since he first settled beneath the roof-tree; and he has been associated with every earlier recollection of the present master. No wonder I found my kinsman in considerable distress. The old man was dying—and youthful scenes, and youthful days, when the stormier passions had not broken "the sunshine of the breast," were now vividly recalled by the approaching dissolution of his ancient and devoted follower.

The summons to the priest was instantly attended,—Father Andrew returned with the messenger, and was immediately closeted with the penitent. Poor Antony's simple life had few dark recollections to harrow his parting hour. His shrift was short, and satisfactory; and at his own request, when the rites of the Roman Catholic Church had been duly celebrated, my cousin and myself were summoned to his bedside.

The old man was supported by Hennessey, as a difficulty in breathing obliged him to be raised up; and the

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fervently beside his old and innocent
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The evening wore on heavily—my ki
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procured our boat-cloaks, we left the pier-he
oared galley,

scene was at once simple and imposing. The early monitor of his youthful fishing-days—the being who had in mountain pastimes been so frequently his companion, possibly recalled softer recollections, and a deep shade of sorrow overspread the countenance of the "sterne homicide." The black-eyed girl, who held a teaspoon to his lips, vainly endeavouring to introduce some nourishment, wept over him like a lamenting child. His faithful terrier sat at the bed-foot, and the fixed and melancholy look that the poor animal turned on her dying master, would have half persuaded me that Venom knew she was about to lose him. Dim as his eye was, it lightened as my kinsman's tall figure darkened the entrance of the chamber; and feebly putting forth his hand, he clasped that of his beloved master with affection, and while weakness and imperfect breathing sadly interrupted his "last farewell," we could with some difficulty thus collect his words.

"I'm going, Master Julius, and the blessing of the Almighty may attend ye! Sure I should be thankful, with all about me to make me easy to the last. I saw your grandfather stretched—I sat beside your father when he departed; may Lord be merciful to both! and here I die with yourself, and the clargy to comfort my last hour, praises be to Mary! Master Julius, will ye listen to a dying man; he that carried ye in his arms, and loved ye better than all the world besides?—ye'll take my advice. *Marry*, Julius avourneen—the ould name that since the days of Shamus a Croaghagh, held land and honour—surely ye won't let it pass? Mind the old man's last words—and now Heaven bless ye!" And in feeble tones he continued muttering benedictions upon all around him. My cousin was really affected, and the priest, perceiving the increasing feebleness of the otter-killer, requested us to retire. We were obeying, when Antony rallied suddenly and unexpectedly: "you will mind the dog, for my sake, Master Julius—and ye'll let trap and fishing-rod hang up in the hall, to put ye in mind of old Antony?" These were his last connected words—his strength failed fast; his memory wandered to other times; he "babbled of green fields," he murmured the names of

lakes and rivers—and while the affectionate priest prayed fervently beside his old and innocent companion, the otter-killer rendered his last sigh in the arms of Hennessey and the weeping Alice.

Talk of parade around the couch of fortune, and what a heartless display is it! *I* saw a rich man die; I saw the hollow mockery of hireling attendants and interested friends; but here, that simple unsophisticated being had a sincerity of grief bestowed upon his death-bed, that to wealth and grandeur would be unattainable!

There was a loud and agonizing burst of sorrow when the otter-killer's death was communicated to those in the hall and kitchen, who, during the closing scene, had been with difficulty prevented from crowding the apartment of the sufferer. But this noisy demonstration of regard was speedily checked by old John, who knew that his master would be doubly displeased should any tumultuary wailings render me uncomfortable. In a short time, order was tolerably established; and with one exception, a quiet and respectful silence supervened. A stout, though aged crone, occasionally burst into a wild lament, accompanied by a beating on her breast, which, like the signal to a chorus, elicited a fresh ebullition from the subordinate mourners. John, however, interposed his authority effectually.—"*Badahust, hanamondioul, badahust,* I say! ye may *keinagh* at the funeral, but ye musn't disturb the master and the company." This jobation restored tranquillity, and in "decent grief" the otter-killer's corpse was duly laid out in its funeral habiliments.

The evening wore on heavily—my kinsman was sensibly affected: his old monitor in the gentle art was gone; and though full of years and ripe for the tomb, his master felt that "he could have better spared a better man." There was a heart-sinking about our party which I had never marked before. The wine had lost its charm; and while the colonel and the priest commenced a game of picquet, my cousin ordered the gig, and proposed that we should pull over to the herring-boats, which in the next estuary, and on the preceding night, had been unusually successful. Accordingly, having lighted our pipes and procured our boat-cloaks, we left the pier-head in the four-oared galley,

The night was unusually dark and warm; not a breath of wind was on the water; the noise of the oars, springing in the coppered rullocks, was heard for a mile off, and the whistle of the sand-pipers and jack curlews, as they took wing from the beach we skirted, appeared unusually shrill. Other noises gradually broke the stillness of the night—the varied hum of numerous voices, chanting the melancholy songs which are the especial favourites of the Irish, began to be heard distinctly—and we soon bore down upon the midnight fishers, directed by sound, not sight.

To approach the fleet was a task of some difficulty. The nets, extended in interminable lines, were so frequent, that much skill was necessary to penetrate this hempen labyrinth, without fouling the back ropes. Warning cries directed our course, and with some delay we treaded the crowded surface, and, guided by buoys and *puckawns*, found ourselves in the very centre of the flotilla.

It was an interesting scene. Momently the boats glided along the back ropes, which were supported at short intervals by corks, and at a greater by inflated dog-skins, and, raising the curtain of network which these suspended, the herrings were removed from the meshes, and deposited in the boats. Some of the nets were particularly fortunate, obliging their proprietors to frequently relieve them of the fish; while others, though apparently stretched within a few yards, and consequently in the immediate run of the herrings, were favoured but with a few stragglers; and the indolent fisherman had to occupy himself with a sorrowful ditty, or in moody silence watched the dark sea, "like some dull ghost waiting on Styx for waftage."

Our visit appeared highly satisfactory, for the *ceade fealteagh*, with a lament for "ould Antony," was universal; while every boat tossed herrings on board, until we were obliged to refuse further largess, and these many "trifles of fish" accummulated so rapidly, that we eventually declined receiving further compliments, or we might have loaded the gig gunnel-deep.

The darkness of the night increased the scaly brilliancy which the phosphoric properties of these beautiful fish

produce. The bottom of the boat, now covered with some thousand herrings, glowed with a living light, which the imagination could not create, and the pencil never imitate. The shades of gold and silvery gems were rich beyond description; and much as I had heard of phosphoric splendour before, every idea I had formed fell infinitely short of its reality.

The same care with which we entered disembarrassed us of the midnight fishing; every boat we passed pressed hard to throw in a "cast of *skuddawns** for the strange gentleman," meaning me; and such was the kindness of these hospitable creatures, that had I been a very Behemoth, I should have this night feasted to satiety on their bounty.

The wind, which had been asleep, began now to sigh over the surface, and before we had cleared the outer back-ropes, the sea-breeze came curling "the midnight wave." The tide was flowing fast, and having stepped the mast, we spread our large lug, and the light galley slipped speedily ashore. A fire which I had noticed above the lodge kindling gradually, fanned by the rising night-breeze, sprang at once into a glorious flame; and through the darkness, its intense light must have been for many leagues discernible. I broke my cousin's musing to ask what it was.

"That, my friend, is one of our ancient customs; that is our *beal-fire*. It is lighted to notify that a death has occurred, and ere long you will see it answered by some of our friends and kindred. Poor old man! none deserved it better, for he would have attended religiously to such observances, had any of my family preceded him to the grave. He lighted my father's beal-fire, and possibly kindled that of my grandsire; old John has probably performed the ceremony for him: thus the kindlier offices are continued, and 'thus runs the world away.'—Who,"—and he stopped, evidently embarrassed at some passing thought—"Who shall say that the ceremonial bestowed upon the wandering otter-killer may not be refused to the last descendant of a line of centuries!"

* Anglice—*Herrings*.

I would have interrupted these melancholy forebodings, but just then, from the lofty brow of an inland hill which I had frequently observed before, a light appeared, first faintly struggling, but presently reddening to the sight; and two fires in Achil, in a time of incredible briefness, flung their deep glow across the waters, and, as I afterward remarked, were repeated for miles along the coast and high grounds.

The rapidity with which the beal-fire was replied to, evidently pleased my kinsman's family vanity; and with higher spirits, we watched the lights tremble in the windows of the lodge, until these *stellæ minores* directed our voyage to its termination.

The colonel and his companion were waiting for us on the pier; they insisted on adding to our supper some of the fish which we had brought home—and while this was being done, my cousin and myself entered the wake, to pay our last duties to the departed otter-killer.

To give additional *éclat* to his funeral rites, the corpse had been removed to the barn, which, from its unusual size, was well fitted to admit the numerous mourners who would attend the ceremony. Upon a rude bier the old man rested, and the trap and fishing-rod were, by a fancy of Hennessey, placed above his head. The barn was filled, but immediate room was made for *the master* and his company. I have seen the corpse when carefully arranged; when the collapsing features were artificially moulded, to imitate a tranquillity that had been foreign to the last event. But here was a study for a painter. The old man's face was puckered into the same conscious smile with which I have heard him terminate his happiest otter-hunt, or some mountain exploit of my kinsman, which appeared to him equally dear; his long hair, released from the band with which he usually confined it, wantoned in silvery ringlets across his neck and shoulders: all else was in wonted form; only that the number of candles round the bier might have been called extravagant, and the plate of snuff upon the bosom of the corpse was heaped with a munificence that would stamp the obsequies as splendid.

Everybody has heard an Irish wake described, and

there is no dissimilarity among a hundred, only that, according to the opulence of the family, and the quantity of funeral refreshments, the mirth and jollity of the *mourners* is invariably proportionate. That the master's ancient retainer should be nobly waked was fully expected by the country, and certainly they were not disappointed. Whiskey in quantities passing all understanding, tobacco in all its preparations, were fearfully consumed on this important ceremony; and during the two days and nights during which the otter-killer was above ground, the barn, spacious as it was, proved unequal to accomodate the hundreds who flocked from a distance of even twenty miles to have "a last look at ould Antony."

When the evening fell on which the corpse was to be carried to its resting-place, a scene of great novelty and great interest ensued. From the insulated situation of the lodge, in connexion with the burying-ground, it was necessary that the body should be carried across the estuary by water. At the appointed hour, from every creek and harbour, the peasantry were seen afloat; and when the funeral left the house, more than an hundred boats accompanied that in which the corpse was deposited. My kinsman followed next to the body with all his visiters and servants; and when the opposite strand was reached, he and his foster-brother placed their shoulders under the coffin, and supported it for a short distance along the beach.

This was, as I was afterward informed, the highest honour that could be conferred upon the departed by his master; and even the magnificence of the otter-killer's wake was held inferior to this proud and public testimony of his patron's affection.

One circumstance was remarked, which was powerfully indicative of animal affection. The dead man's terrier had remained night and day beside his bier, since the morning of his death. Unnoticed, she crept on board the boat that conveyed the coffin to the church-yard; and when the grave was filled, she was with difficulty carried home by an attendant, but escaped during the night, crossed the estuary by swimming, and again laid

down upon the turf, beneath which her beloved master was sleeping. Every care and kindness was bestowed upon her in the lodge. No one addressed her but as '*poor Venney.*' Notwithstanding, she drooped visibly, and in three weeks after his interment, in death the otter-killer's favourite "bore him company."

When we reached the lodge, we made a discovery, which possibly with some people might lead to an opposite conclusion, and either prove the security or insecurity of the country.

Not a living being had remained within the walls, and consequently, for several hours, the house and household goods were abandoned to the mercy of chance and chance travellers. The guardian saint, however, acquitted herself like a gentlewoman. We found every thing in pious order; and had the lodge been under the especial care of the glorious Santa Barbara* herself, watch and ward could not have been more faithfully maintained.

*Appendix, No. XVIII.

LETTER XXXIX.

Weather changes—Symptoms of Winter—Animal Appearances—Night Passage of Barnacles—Grey Plover—Hints for shooting Plover — Wild Geese — Swans — Ducks — Burke transported — Evening at the Lodge—Feminine Employments.

A MONTH has passed: winter comes on with giant strides, and the last lingering recollections of autumn are over. The weather becomes more rainy and tempestuous; and bogs which we once crossed easily, owing to the continued wet, are now quite impassable. The swell, which during the summer months came in in long and measured undulations, breaks in masses across the bar, and sends a broken and tumbling sea inside the estuary, so as to render it unsafe to expose any boat of heavy tonnage to its influence. Pattigo seldom ventures from his anchorage, and when last he ventured to pass a night at the pier, he ground away a hawser against the stones, notwithstanding every pains were bestowed in renewing its *service*. The springs are unusually high; and two nights since, the lodge and paddocks were completely insulated, and our communications with the mainland carried on by ferriage. The river rises fearfully, and the huge masses of turf left along the strand prove how violent the mountain torrents must be at this advanced season. The sweet and crystal stream is nowhere seen; and Scott's beautiful lines happily describe the turbid river that has replaced it.

"Late, gazing down the steepy linn
That hems our little garden in,
Low in its dark and narrow glen,
You scarce the rivulet might ken,
So thick the tangled greenwood grew,
So feebly trill'd the streamlet through:
Now, murmuring hoarse, and frequent seen,
Through bush and briar, no longer green,
An angry brook it sweeps the glade,
Brawls over rock and wild cascade."

But other, and no less certain tokens harbinger the wild season that has arrived. Yesterday a six-months' puppy who crept after me across the adjoining paddocks, stopped in a rushy field. Suspecting that he had a hare before him, I passed on to push her from the *form:* I was mistaken—a *wisp** of snipes, possibly thirty in number, sprang, and scattering in all directions, pitched loosely over the adjoining bogs. To-day I saw a flock of barnacles;† and the herdsman on the sand-banks apprizes us of the first appearance of a *Crowour Keough.*‡ This is the earliest woodcock announced, but my kinsman has no doubt but *the flight*‖ has fallen in Achil; and we shall cross in a few days, if the weather answers, and try Slieve More, he says, with excellent success.

* * * * * *

I had been some hours in bed, when I was awakened by a quarrelling among the dogs, which I overheard the keeper settling with the whip. I remained, and it is rather an unusual thing with me, a long time awake. An hour passed, all was again in deep repose, and I too was sinking into sleep, when a strange and unaccountable noise roused me. It seemed to be at first faint and distant, but momently increasing, grew louder and more distinct, until it passed to all appearance directly above my head. The sounds were wild and musical—varied in tone beyond any thing I could describe, and continuing until they gradually became remote and indistinct, and at length totally died away. I was amazingly puzzled, but was obliged to reserve my curiosity to be satisfied in the morning.

My cousin smiled at my inquiry;—"And you heard these strange noises as well as I? This, if you re-

* *Wisp*, in sporting parlance, means a flock of snipes.

† Appendix, No. XIX.

‡ Why this title, literally meaning "the blind cock," should be conferred by the peasantry of Ballycroy on a bird so remarkable for the extraordinary quickness of his vision, is a paradox. Such is the known acuteness of the woodcock's vision, that the cover-shooter chooses a masqued position, or the *Crowour Keough* would seldom come within range of the gun.

‖ *Flight* is the term used to describe a flock of woodcocks, as they arrive in this country, in their annual migration from the north of Europe.

mained here, would be little marvel, as nightly *the barnacles* cross the lodge in passing from one estuary to the other. There they sit on yonder point;"—and taking me to the window, I saw a considerable extent of sand literally black with this migratory tribe: they come here in immense multitudes, but, from their coarse and fishy flavour, afford little occupation to the water-shooter.

The land barnacles are less numerous, although they are found in tolerable abundance. During the day, I saw two flocks of one or two hundred pairs upon the bogs, They are, when sufficiently rested from their journey, sought for with great avidity by the few gunners in the district, and are very delicious when kept a sufficient time after being shot, before the cook transfers them to the spit.

Gray plover must also migrate in thousands hither. Nothing else could account for the immense flocks that have been seen, and will continue, as I am informed, to arrive. The shores and moors are everywhere crowded with them; and within a hundred yards of the lodge, Hennessey, with two barrels, killed seven couple and a half last evening. The bent banks are their favourite fixture; and I have never crossed them of late without finding at least one *stand.* These vary in numbers; but I am certain I have seen three hundred of these birds thus congregated.

There is, in shooting plover, a common remark made by sportsmen, that the *second* is always the more productive barrel. The rapidity with which they vary their position when on the ground, seldom admits of a grand combination for a sitting, or rather a running shot. But when on the wing, their mode of flight is most favourable for permitting the shot to tell; and it is by no means unusual to bring down a number. When disturbed, they frequently wheel back directly above the fowler, and offer a tempting mark if he should have a barrel in reserve; and even when too high for the shot to take effect, I have often thrown away a random fire; for the plover, on hearing the report, directly make a sweep downwards on the wing, and I have by this means brought them within range of the second barrel.

When the season advances, the number of geese* that visit this wild peninsula is astonishing. For miles I have traced their night-feedings along a river bank, where the marshy surface afforded them their favourite sustenance. They are far more wary than the barnacle, and are extremely difficult of access in moderate weather; but chance and storm occasionally favour the sportsman, and in spite of the caution of these birds, the flock will be surprised, and the patient gunner reap in a lucky moment the reward of many a weary vigil and bootless attempt.

The last and greatest of the wild visiters are the swan tribe.† Their being scarce or plentiful depends much upon the season—and in winters of extreme severity thousands of these birds will be found upon the estuaries and inland lakes. The noise they make is wild and musical, and with *a little fancy*, my kinsman says, the ear will trace modulations almost extending to infinity. These birds, during severe frosts and snow-storms, are easily surprised and shot; and the skins, when carefully stripped off, will well repay the shooter for his trouble.

To enumerate the varieties of the duck tribe that an inclement winter brings to these shores, would be difficult. I have already noticed the *Pintail*† and the *Golden-eye*† upon the estuary. Widgeons† come here in immense flocks; and that beautiful bird the teal,† the smallest and most delicate of the whole species, is found for the remainder of the season on loughs and rivers in abundance. The Grebe and Tringa tribes furnish numerous and interesting varieties; and an ornithologist as well as a sportsman would have here an ample field, could he but set the season at defiance, and pass his winter on this exposed and stormy coast.

But the note of dissolution of our happy party has sounded. The colonel, having divers premonitory twinges, has named an early day for his departure. To be caught by the gout here, would be a hazardous experiment; and the portmanteau, whose captivity was

* Appendix, No. XX.
† Appendix, Nos. XXI. XXII. XXIII. XXIV. and XXV.

likely to occasion such desperate results, is again packed and confided to *Andy Bawn*. But the commander's baggage is not to be exposed to a second interruption. The attempt was fatal to Mr. Burke; for emboldened by the feud which his unadvised aggression created between my kinsman and this modern Cacus, the *Sweenies** seized the opportunity, and the outlaw was arrested in a whiskey-house, tried, and escaped by a miracle from being hanged,—but was, alas! consigned to Australasia for the course of his natural life.

To do Mr. Burke justice, he left his native soil with regret. Finding all chance of commuted punishment over, he endeavoured to obtain his liberty by an ingenious plan to strangle the turnkeys, and emancipate all and every victim of judicial tyranny who pleased to accept his freedom. He did, poor man, make an excellent offer to choke a jailer—but fortune frowned upon the attempt; the half-throttled janitor was saved—and the hero of the bridge of Ballyveeny will cross the equator at the public expense.

To-morrow, wind and weather permitting, the commander takes his departure, and to-night will consequently be a high and solemn festival. Would it were over! I cannot, dare not, offer an excuse for cavilling at bumpers, even were they "fathoms deep;" and all the consolation that an aching head will claim to-morrow, will be a saw from old John about "the dog that bit me," and the merciless badinage of that black-eyed coquette, who imbodies all that Moore idealized in sketching his *Nora Crina*.

* * * * *

How soft the evening twilight falls on the waters of the estuary! the tide kisses the very verge of the green sward, and looks so treacherously calm, as if its storms were for ever ended. Boat after boat hurries down the inlet to shoot their herring-nets for the night; and many

* This numerous clan derive their origin from a Northman. They are, I know not with what justice, reckoned a treacherous and vindictive tribe, and a feud with them is consequently held to be a dangerous affair.

an ancient ditty, or ruder tale, will while away the time till morning. Occasionally a struggle between two rival barks ensues—and I remark, the contest invariably takes place before the windows of the lodge. One very singular one amused me much. A boat rowed by four women challenged, and actually out-pulled another, though propelled by a similar number of the coarser sex.

Indeed, the occupations of the ladies of Ballycroy are not essentially feminine; the roughest and most dangerous employments they share in common with the men. A Mahratta woman, they told me in India, regularly shampoos her husband's horse. Were I of the fair sex, I would rather operate on a quadruped, than row a fishing boat by the day, and cut sea-weed up to the waist in water, with the momentary expectation of being swept from my precarious footing by the first mountainous surge.

LETTER XL.

Colonel leaves us—Last Visit to Achil—Snipes and Woodcocks—Their Migration—Solitary Snipe—Cock-shooting in Achil—Mountain Covers—Cock-shooting: its Accidents—Anecdotes—An unlucky Companion.

THE colonel has left us, and we lose in him the best and safest of friends—a true buon camarado. With spirits of youthful buoyancy, a temper unsoured by time, and indifferent to worldly annoyances, years have only mellowed his companionable qualities, while they added deeply to his anecdote and information. Few men of *a certain age* succeed in retaining their place as first favourites with others some quarter of a century their juniors; but the colonel is an exception: we shall feel a blank in our society; and in this gay and careless spirit lose a dear companion, who seemed to put time at defiance, and forbade gout itself to interrupt his comfort or "mar his tranquillity."

The two last days have been dry, the wind is favourable, a white frost has been visible this morning, and we are about to pay our parting visit to Achil. We have again sent to our ancient entertainers, the Water Guards, to beg a shelter for the night; for the days have so sensibly shortened, that we shall have enough to do to reach Dugurth at nightfall.

"Merrily, merrily bounds the bark," and an hour landed us at the Ridge Point. Our establishment is on a minor scale to what we sported on our first descent; we have only some two or three *hangers-on*, and have brought but two brace of orderly and antiquated setters.

I have seen much of snipe-shooting* in many parts of Ireland, but I could not have imagined that the number of these exquisite birds could be found within the same space, that one particular marsh which bounds the

* Appendix, No. XXVI.

rabbit-banks produced. Independently of a quantity of detached birds, several *wisps* sprang wildly, as they always do; and I have no doubt but this fen had been their temporary resting-place after their autumnal migration from the north. We were the more inclined to this opinion, from finding many of the birds we killed extremely lean; while others that sprang *singly* were in admirable condition. Achil is a natural resting-place for migratory birds; and hence I can well believe the account given by the islanders, of the immense numbers of woodcocks and snipes which are here found, in their transit from a high latitude to our more genial climate. The same remark is made touching the vernal visit of these strangers to this island. After woodcocks have for days vanished from the inland covers, they have been found in flocks on the Achil and Erris highlands, evidently congregating for their passage and preparing for the attempt.*

It may be easily conceived, that whether the winter stock of snipes and woodcocks be limited or abundant, will mainly depend upon the state of the winds and weather at the period of migration. Hence, when the latter end of October and the succeeding month have continued stormy, with south or south-easterly gales, a lamentable deficiency of game has been invariably observed. That multitudes perish on their passage, or are obliged to change their course, is certain*—and the exhausted state in which the small portion of the survivors reach these shores, attests how difficult the task must be to effect a landing, when opposed by contrary winds and stormy weather.

We crossed the bent-banks, occasionally knocking a rabbit over as we went along, and wheeled to the westward to skirt the base of Slieve More. We had not proceeded far, before an islander, who was herding cows, told us that there was a *crowour keogh beg*† in the next ravine. We accordingly put a setter in, and were gratified with a steady point in the place the herdsman

* Appendix, Nos. XXVII. and XXVIII.
† A little woodcock.

had intimated. The bird sprang, and was knocked over by my companion, when the little woodcock proved to be a double snipe.* These birds are extremely scarce here, and a few couple only are seen during a whole season, by persons most constant in traversing the bogs. There cannot be a doubt but this bird is a distinct species; but for its extreme rarity and solitary habits naturalists are puzzled to account.

We shot, before we began to ascend the hill, a couple of woodcocks lying out upon the moors. They were very shy, never allowing the dogs to come to a set. This is usually the case when these birds are outlying; and I have followed a cock for miles before I got him within fire, teased by his getting up before I could approach, and removing some hundred yards from the gun. Some favourable inequality of surface has at last enabled me to close with my wild quarry, and, notwithstanding the keenness of his eye, get the wary stranger eventually within range of shot.

There grows in the valleys and water-courses which are so frequent in the Achil and Ballycroy hills, that large and shrub-like heather that reaches nearly to the height of brushwood. Here, in the earlier season, the woodcocks repose after their passage, and at times the numbers found in these ravines are stated to be extraordinary. With the first frost or snow they move off to the interior, dropping as they go along in the different covers, until a part of the flight reaches the very centre of the kingdom. We met, during our day's fag, about fifteen couple, out of which eight and a half were brought to bag. To these we added three brace and a half of grouse, and a brace of hares. When with these were united snipes, plovers, and rabbits, it is not too much to say that our bags were most imposing, and produced above fifty head of game. From our kind friends the Water Guards, we received a hospitable reception; and next morning were run across the bay in their galley, and landed safely upon our own shores.

The cock-shooting, to use my cousin's words, in the

* Appendix, No. XXIX.

west of Ireland, is acknowledged to be very superior; and when *the flight* has been large, and the season is sufficiently severe to drive the birds well to cover, there is not, to a quick eye, more beautiful shooting in the world. Some of the covers are copses of natural wood, situated in the very centre of the mountains. Consequently, when the snow falls, every woodcock for miles around deserts the heath and seeks the nearest shelter. Then will the sportsman be amply repaid for all his labour. From a copse of not more than thirty acres extent I have seen fifty couple of woodcocks flushed; and as several excellent covers lay in the immediate vicinity, it was no unusual thing for two or three guns to bring home twenty, nay, thirty couple. I have known a party fire a number of shots that appeared incredible; and I have more than once expended my last charge of powder, and left, for want of ammunition, one or more copses untried.

The best cock-shooting cannot be had without a good deal of fag. Like fox-hunting, it is work for hardy spirits; and *non sine pulvere palma*, will apply to both. To reach a mountain-cover, the sportsman must be on the alert two or three hours before daylight, for he has likely some ten Irish miles to ride or drive over, by a rough and dangerous road, now rendered scarcely discernible from the adjacent bogs, and hardly passable from snow-drifts. The short day is hardly sufficient for shooting the different woods;—and then the same distance must be again traversed, for which the shooter will be a borrower from the night. Then he must reckon on divers delays and sundry accidents; horses will come down, dog-carts capsize, a trace break, or a spring fail; and what has annoyed me more than all together, probably a fog rise so suddenly and densely as to render the road undistinguishable from the surrounding heaths. But when all this is achieved,—when a cover-party have fairly encircled the table, after the luxury of a complete toilet; when the fire sparkles, the curtains are drawn, and the wine circulates—why then, without, let the storm blow till it burst it cheeks—and within, Father Care may hang himself in his own garters.

There are other perils, also, to which the cover-shooter is obnoxious. The eye is sometimes endangered by pressing ungardedly through the copse-wood; and I knew one case where the sight was totally lost from a twig springing from a person who was struggling through the underwood and striking the next who followed. The legs also are frequently and severely wounded by the sharp stumps which remain after a thicket has been thinned. But from random shots the chief danger arises; and to prevent accidents occurring, a party, and particularly if it be numerous, should be guarded in selecting their stands and altering their positions. I have been struck a dozen times, but never with any worse effect than receiving a shot or two in my cheek and ear; but, many a time I have felt a shower rattle against my fustian jacket, which, however, endured it bravely, as a garment of proof should do.

Some men, from carelessness or stupidity, are really a nuisance to a cover-party; and to others, one would almost ascribe a fatality, and avoid them like an evil genius. In the former case, I have found, after remonstrance failed, and they continued throwing their shot liberally around, without apparently caring one farthing upon whose person it alighted, the best cure was instantly to turn a barrel as nearly in the direction of the report as possible. A well distributed charge rattling through the brushwood, and falling upon the delinquent, gave, practically, a hint that made him more cautious for the future, and proved more effective than the most powerful jobation. Of the latter class,—I mean unlucky companions,—I shall particularize one. Captain M—— shot with me an entire season. He was a pretty shot, and an excellent fellow; but I never entered a cover with him that I was not certain to be struck before we returned home. Every precaution to evade his shot was useless. If in a copse of a mile long there was a solitary opening to admit its passage, he was opposite it to a certainty; and my first intimation that such an alley did exist, would be a fall of withered leaves from the bushes above, and most likely a few grains lodging in my hat or jacket. If I moved to avoid a chance of accident,

something induced him to make a corresponding change; and at last I became so nervous, that I obliged him momently to call out, that I might ascertain our relative positions, and guard, if possible, against injury.

We once, during a severe frost, shot the beautiful islands in the lake of Castlebar, which belong to the Marquis of Sligo. There were an immense number of cocks in cover, and we had been particularly successful; but the wonder was, I had that day escaped unwounded, and my prayer to "keep lead out of me" had been heard. On our return, my friend was pluming himself on this result. "It was foolish," he said, "to reckon him unlucky. To be sure, some shots of his had been unfortunate, but such would ever be the case." We had now left off shooting, and were within a few fields of the barracks, when a jack snipe sprang from a drain on the road-side, and flying to the top of the field, pitched in the upper ditch. I followed it merely to discharge my barrels—it sprang, and the report of my gun disturbed a hare in the bottom of the field; she moved, and my companion instantly discharged both barrels. From the hardness of the surface, the shot rose; a shower fell upon the protected parts of my person, while two struck me in the lip, and cut me deeply. I was more than one hundred yards from him, yet from the hard frost, the *ricochet* of the shot came as sharply upon me as if I had been within point-blank distance. After that incident, need I add, much as I loved him, I never pulled a trigger in his company again.

LETTER XLI.

Dull Evening—Memoir of Hennessey.

We sat down to dinner *tête-à-tête*, and although both myself and my kinsman made an exertion to banish unpleasant reminiscences, the evening was the most sombre that I had yet passed. The happy party who once tenanted our "merie home," are never to meet again. The otter-killer "sleeps the sleep that knows no breaking"—the colonel has retired to his winter-quarters —the priest's confessions call him from us for a season—and some secret intelligence which reached the lodge over-night, has caused Hennessey to disappear.

To gratify a strong expression of curiosity on my part respecting the latter, my cousin told me the following particulars of this singular personage.

"If ever man came into the world with the organ of destructiveness surcharged, it was my unhappy foster-brother. He was a lively and daring boy, and being a favourite with my late father, had opportunities of improvement afforded to him which persons in his sphere seldom can obtain. But Hennessey showed little inclination for literary pursuits; the gun was more adapted to him than the pen—and at fifteen, when but a very indifferent scribe, he was admitted by the whole population to be the best shot of his years that 'ever laid stock to shoulder.' Encouraged by my father's partiality, from this period he led an idle careless life, and rambled over the country, breaking dogs, or amusing himself with the gun and fishing-rod.

"I was at college when the first of his misfortunes occurred. He had imprudently ventured into a dancing-house, where a number of the *Sweenies* were assembled, with whom he had previously been at feud, and, as might have been anticipated, a quarrel quickly arose. Hennessey, too late, perceived his danger; but with that

daring determination for which he has ever been remarkable, when the assault began, he made a sudden dash for the door, and overturning all that opposed him, succeeded in escaping. He was, however, closely pursued. From his uncommon activity, he far outstripped all but one of his enemies. He had nearly reached the river—but his enemy was close behind. Intending to disable his pursuer, Hennessey picked up a stone, and unfortunately threw it with such fatal precision, that the scull of his opponent was beaten in, and he expired on the spot.

"Well, this was an unfortunate affair, but it was homicide in self-defence. My father accommodated matters with the Sweenies, and my foster-brother was discharged without a prosecution.

"A year passed, but the Sweenies had not forgotten or forgiven the death of their kinsman. Hennessey's rambling habits exposed him to frequent encounters with this clan; and one night, when returning late from the fair of Newport, with two or three companions, he came into unexpected collision with a party of his ancient enemies. A scuffle ensued—in the struggle he wrested a loaded whip from his antagonist, and struck the unhappy wretch so heavily with his own weapon, that after lingering nearly a month, he died from the contusion.

"This second mishap occasioned us a deal of trouble; but Hennessey surrendered, was tried, and acquitted, and we all trusted that his misfortunes were at an end. He abjured the use of spirits, avoided late hours, and such meetings as might expose him to any collision with that clan who had been so unfortunate to him, and to whom he had been so unfortunate, and religiously determined to avoid every cause of quarrelling; but fate determined that it should be otherwise.

"Having been invited to a *dragging home*, as the bridegroom was his near relative, Hennessey could not without giving offence decline attending on the happy occasion. He was then a remarkably handsome fellow—and you would vainly now seek in those gaunt and care-worn features, the manly beauty which then caused many a rustic heart to beat. The bride's cousin accompanied her; she

was remarkably pretty, and was, besides, reported to be the largest heiress in the barony. With such advantages, no wonder 'of lovers she'd plenty,' as the ballad says;—my foster-brother met her, danced with her, drank with her—loved her, and was beloved in turn. Every rival was double distanced; but she was unfortunately betrothed by her father to a wealthy *kearne*;* and although I, in person, interposed, and used my powerful influence, the old fellow her father was obstinate in refusing to break off the match.

"Hennessey was no man to see his handsome mistress consigned without her own consent to the arms of a rival. He made the usual arrangements, and I encouraged him to carry her off. The evening came—he left the lodge in a boat, with six fine young peasants; and crossing the bay, landed by moonlight at a little distance from the village where his inamorata dwelt.

"That very night a multitude of the Malleys had accompanied the accepted suitor to conclude all necessary preliminaries. The cabin of the heiress was crowded, and all within was noisy revelry. Hennessey, with one companion, stole to the back of the house.

"He knew the chamber of the bride elect, for he had more than once, 'when all the world were dreaming,' visited his pretty mistress. He looked through the little casement, and, sight of horror! there she was, seated on the side of the bed, and the kearne's arm around her waist, with all the familiarity of a privileged lover! There, too, was the Priest of Inniskea, and divers elders of 'both the houses'—while the remainder of the company, for whose accommodation this grand chamber was insufficient, were indulging in the kitchen or dancing in the barn.

"Since the days of Lochinvar, there never was a more daring suitor than my foster-brother; yet he did not consider it a prudent measure to enter the state apartment "mong bridesmen, and kinsmen, and clansmen, and all,'—but waited patiently at the window, to see what some lucky chance might do. Nor did he wait in vain. Kathleein turned her pretty eyes on the moonlit case-

* Hibernice—*A rich vulgar clown.*

ment, and thought, poor girl! how often her young lover had stolen there in secret, and told his tale of passion. A tap, too light for any but the ear of love to detect, arrested her attention, and she saw the indistinct form of a human face outside; and whose could it be but her favoured youth? Seizing an early opportunity, she stole from the apartment; she soon was in her lover's arms; a few words, and a few kisses,—and all was settled;—and while the kearne, the priest, and the father, were regulating the exact quantities of cattle and plenishing,* that were to dower the handsome bride, Kathleein was hurrying to the shore with her young and daring suitor.

"An attempt so boldly and so fortunately begun, was, however, doomed to end unhappily. One of the Malleys had discovered the interview, and witnessed the elopement. Having silently observed the route of the fugitives, he apprized the parties within, that their negotiations were likely to become nugatory, and a fierce and vindictive pursuit was instantly commenced. The distance, however, to the beach was short; the companion of the bold abductor had run forward; the bride was won—the boat was launched—the oars were dipping in the water—when, alas! the rush of rapid footsteps was heard, and oaths and threats announced that the fugitives were closely followed. Two or three of the Malleys had far outstripped the rest; but a minute more, and pursuit would have been hopeless. One man had passed the others far, and on the brink of the tide he caught the fair runaway in his arms, while the companions of the gallant were actually pulling her on board. The chase was hard at hand—twenty feet were heard rushing over the loose shingle—not a moment was to be lost, or the bride was gone for ever. Like lightning Hennessey caught up a stretcher from the bottom of the boat, discharged one murderous blow upon the man who held back his beloved mistress, a deep-drawn moan was heard, and the unhappy kearne, for it was himself, sank upon the beach without life or motion! Off went the boat—off went the lady—and the athletic crew pulled through the sparkling

* *Plenishing*, means household furniture, beds, blankets, &c. &c.

water, little dreaming that their exulting leader was for *the third time* a homicide! Great God! I cannot tell you what I suffered next morning, when the tragical result of an attempt I had myself encouraged was told me. My first care was to look to the safety of my foster-brother and his bride; and until pursuit was over, I had them conveyed by Pattigo in the hooker to Innisboffin. There they remained in safe concealment, and for six months it was not deemed prudent to permit them to return, as the clan of the deceased were numerous and vindictive.

"Time flew. They came back, and for some time remained here unmolested. Kathleein was near her confinement, when one day we received information that the Malleys had procured a warrant, with a civil force to execute it, and were determined at every hazard to arrest my foster-brother. I, a magistrate myself, could not openly protect him;—and that evening he left the lodge at nightfall, to shelter himself in the island of Innisbiggle until the threatened danger passed. Kathleein unfortunately accompanied him; although we told her that there was but one poor family on the place, and its difficulty of approach, while favourable to the concealment of her husband, was unsuited to any female situated like her.

"On landing on the island, the solitary family who generally resided in the single cabin it contained, were absent at the fair of Westport. Hennessey and his wife took possession of the hut, lighted a fire, and made themselves as comfortable as the wretched hovel would admit. Even then he urged her to return to the lodge—but to leave him in perfect solitude on this desolate place was more than she could determine. Night came, and the weather, which had been squally all day, became worse momently, and at midnight blew a gale. The outlaw and his wife were now shut out from all the world, for a raging sea was roaring round the island, and all communication with the main was interrupted. Whether fear precipitated the dreaded event I know not; but in the middle of the night, while the elemental war was in its fury, symptoms of approaching travail were perceived by poor Kathleein, and the unhappy girl became more and more

sensible of the terrible danger that was coming on. God of Mercy! what was to be done? It wanted some hours of morning, and even were it light, until the tide fell, no mortal could cross that stormy water. Poor wretch! with a withered heart, all that he could do to cheer his sinking companion was done; but every hour she became worse, and every moment her pain and danger were increasing. Driven to madness, at the first dawn of morning he rushed madly to the beach, and though the retiring tide rushed between the island and the main with furious violence, he plunged into the boiling eddies, and with great strength and desperate courage made good his passage to the opposite shore.

"To obtain help was of course attended with delay; at last, however, it was accomplished, and the tide fell sufficiently to permit some females to cross the *farset*.* He, the unhappy husband, far outstripped them: like a deer he bounded over the beach that interposed between the cabin and the sands—he reached it—a groan of exquisite agony was heard from within—next moment he was stooping over his exhausted wife—a dead infant was pressed wildly to her bosom: she turned a dying look of love upon his face, and was a corpse within the arms of the ill-starred homicide!

"When the tidings of the melancholy fate of poor Kathleein were carried to the lodge, I got the hooker underweigh, and stood over to the island. My unhappy foster-brother appeared paralysed with sorrow, and incapable of any exertion. We brought him, with the bodies of the young mother and the dead babe, to the house, and the latter were in due season interred with every mark of sympathy and respect.

"For a time I dreaded that the unfortunate homicide would have sunk into hopeless idiotcy; but he suddenly appeared to rouse his torpid faculties: he became gloomy and morose—and, deaf to all my remonstrances, to the least of which formerly he would have paid the most marked regard, he wandered over the country and seemed

* The strand communicating at low water between an island and the main.

to court an arrest, or rather an attempt at it; for, from his desperation, I am inclined to think he would have done some new deed of blood had his enemies ventured to assail him. All I could do to prevent mischief I did. I had the bullets drawn from his fire-arms when he slept; I kept him under constant espionage, and retained him as much about my person as I could possibly contrive. Whether none would grapple with a desperate and well-armed man, or that some feeling for his sufferings softened the rancour of his enemies for a time, I know not, but he passed unmolested through the country; and the most daring of the Sweenies and Malleys left the road, when they accidentally met my unhappy foster-brother. Time has gradually softened his distress, and the asperity of his temper has subsided; he has lost the fierce and savage look that lately no stranger could meet without being terror-stricken; and I shall endeavour to get the death of his miserable rival, which decidedly was unpremeditated and accidental, accommodated. Some intelligence has made it advisable for Hennessey to leave the lodge, although I hardly think any of his enemies would dare to seek him here; but still we cannot be too cautious, and to be placed in the power of his former foemen at this moment would be to involve his life in imminent peril.

"His misfortunes have given me more distress than any thing that has ever befallen myself personally. His attachment to me is so devoted, that I cannot but have brotherly feelings for this ill-starred fosterer. Although he would follow me to the corners of the earth if I required it, he would rather risk a trial than leave the country, which I have often and earnestly entreated him to do."

I offered here to take Hennessey under my protection to England, but my kinsman shook his head.

"It is a kind intention, Frank, but he would not leave me. I am the last link that binds him to the world, and while life lasts, we must run our wild career in the same couples. Poor Hennessey! there are worse men than he, although misfortune has made him *thrice* a homicide."

It was late; John brought oysters at the customary hour and soon after we separated for the night.

LETTER XLII.

My Departure fixed—Coast suited to an Ornithologist—God-sends—An ocean Waif—My last Day—Coursing—Size of Hares—Fen-shooting—Kill a Bittern—Castle of Doona—Fall of the Tower—Netting Rabbits—Reflections—Morning—Passage through the Sound—Hennessey—Departure from the Kingdom of Connaught.

The day of my departure from this wild retreat, where so many months have happily passed over, is determined; indeed, the season hardly admits a longer sojourn, and circumstances beyond my control require an immediate return to England. My kinsman has made arrangements for passing the genial season of Christmas, and the remainder of the winter, with his relations in the interior; and in the morning fox-hunt and evening dance, the dullest months of gloomy winter will merrily disappear.

For me, were I not encumbered with a fortune, and "all the ills that flesh is heir to" when one is afflicted with independence, this place would suit me admirably. Though these shores be wild, and weather savage, yet every day brings its novelty along with it. The winter fisheries on the coast are magnificent; and birds known only to a naturalist elsewhere, are daily presented during the stormy season to the active and intelligent shooter. That wild being Hennessey has preserved an infinity of curious specimens; and many a rare production that the ornithologist would prize, is here shot and disregarded by the peasant who is so fortunate as to possess a gun.

Among the natural advantages which this remote coast possesses, the ocean contributes largely to the stock, and even the tempest does not rage in vain. The prevailing westerly winds drive many a serviceable waif to the shore; and seldom a winter passes but some valuable wreck or derelict property adds to my kinsman's limited resources. True, these "angel visits" are irregular, and come in questionable shape; but still, be they in the form of butter or rum, train-oil or mahogany, they answer

"for the nonce," and even a dead body has not been profitless to the finder.

I possibly have thus digressed from having witnessed the triumphant arrival of a huge beam of Dantzic oak and a ship's topmast, which certain retainers of my gentle cousin have towed in. It appears that these "spolia opima" were discovered early in the morning about the centre of the bay, and a boat from both shores approached them nearly at the same time. Both, like true vassals, claimed in behalf of their respective master; and it being impossible on what an Irishman would very naturally term "debatable land," to settle the question of property, the respective crews fought the thing fairly out, and my kinsman's representatives being men of thews and sinews, after breaking two heads, and chucking one gentleman of "the Capulets" overboard, brought the God-sends safely hither. Law there will be, of course. The rival claimant was formerly an attorney, who managed to spoliate an unhappy fool who was litigiously inclined, and of course became owner of the property. He who thus gets them will be most tenacious of ill-acquired rights; and this log and spar will most likely terminate in being made a droit of the Admiralty.

We started on our last chassé—and the *ultima dies* of our sporting wanderings has come. The shortened days and wet moors have made us desert grouse-shooting, and we crossed the estuary to shoot a fen some three miles off, which at this season is thickly tenanted with snipes and water-fowl.

The day was particularly favourable; dark and quiet,* with a gentle breeze. As we had to traverse a hill which bounds the tillage grounds of several of the opposite villages, we brought the grayhounds with us, to get a run or two while passing this otherwise unprofitable beat. For my own part I had early given up coursing in disgust. The hares were not plenty—difficult to find—and when we did get them a-foot, they either made for the seashore, or ran into some morass where dogs had no chance whatever, and one became weary of seeing them cut themselves on rocks, or flounder in a bog;—and

* Appendix, No. XXX.

latterly I gave up the business as a bad concern. But on this occasion I was agreeably disappointed. The hill afforded a sound and level surface;—from its contiguity to the cornfields the hares were tolerably numerous, and before we reached the shooting-ground, we had had six excellent courses, and killed four hares.

I never observed a more striking contrast in point of size than these hares exhibited. Two of them were of the smallest mountain class; dark-coloured meager animals, who certainly made matchless running while they lasted. The others were of the fullest size, and in point of good condition, though neither so large nor so white as Byron's,* would have done honour to any hare-park in Great Britain.

The fen we sought was situate in a valley between two gentle slopes, and, formed by a deep and sluggish stream which passed through its centre, extending for about four miles, varying its breadth from a few yards to more than a quarter of a mile. This morass was interspersed with shrubs and underwood, and alders of inconsiderable size were occasionally clumped along the borders. Part of the surface was too unsound to admit its being traversed by the lightest foot, but generally it was broken into tammocks, which a bold and practised shooter might pass with little difficulty. We took opposite sides, and consequently few birds sprang without affording one or the other of the guns a fair shot. The number of snipes that flushed in this fen went far beyond my expectation, though considerably excited;—and besides, we met at least fifteen couple of that sweet little duck the teal. We followed the morass to its extremity, and then returned—and our beat homewards was pleasanter, and, so far as the game-bags went, more profitable than the first range.

Out of seventy head, we reckoned one woodcock and a brace of old *stagers* that we found among the heathy banks bordering the fen. We shot six couple of teal; and with one exception, the remainder of the count were snipes, of which at least a fourth were jacks. In the most impassable section of the morass, old York pointed with more than customary steadiness; and, "it might be

* Appendix, No. XXXI.

fancy," actually looked round with peculiar expression, as if he would intimate that no common customer was before him! I got within twenty yards and encouraged the old setter to go in; but he turned his grizzled and intelligent eyes to mine, and wagged his tail as if he would have said, "Lord! you don't know what I have here." A tuft of earth, flung by one of the aides-de-camp, obliged the skulker to get up, and to our general surprise a fine bittern rose, I knocked him over, but though he came down with a broken wing and wounded leg, he kept the old dog at bay until my companion floundered through the swamp and secured him. On this exploit I plumed myself, for bitterns are here extremely scarce, and in Ballycroy they are seldom heard or found.

On our return home we passed the old Castle of Doona, once supposed to have been honoured by the residence of Mrs. Grace O'Malley, who, if fame tells truth, was neither a rigid moralist, or over-particular in her ideas of "meum and tuum." Some wild traditions are handed down of her exploits; and her celebrated visit to that English vixen Elizabeth, is fairly on record. The castle of Doona was, till a few years since, in excellent preservation, and its masonry was likely to have puzzled Father Time himself; but Irish ingenuity achieved in a few hours what as many centuries had hitherto failed in effecting.

A rich and hospitable farmer,* whose name will be long remembered in this remote spot, had erected a comfortable dwelling immediately adjoining the court-yard wall of the ancient fortress; and against the tower itself was piled in wealthy profusion a huge supply of winter fuel. It was a night of high solemnity, for his first-born son was christened. No wonder then that all within the house were drunk as lords. Turf was wanted, and one of *the boys* was despatched for a cleave-full—but though Patt could clear a fair, and "bear as much beating as a bull," he was no man to venture into the old tower in the dark, "and it haunted." Accordingly, to have fair play "if the ghost gripped him," he provided himself with a brand of burning bog-deal. No goblin assailed him, and he filled his basket and returned

* John Conway.

unharmed to the company, but, unfortunately, forgot the light behind him. The result may be anticipated. The turf caught fire, and from the intense heat of such a mass of fuel, the castle-walls were rent from top to bottom, and one side fell before morning with a crash like thunder. Nor was the calamity confined to fallen tower and lost fuel. Alas! several cags and ankers of contraband spirits were buried beneath the walls, and the huge masses of masonry that came down, burst the concealed casks of cognac and schiedam.

* * * * *

We found the warrener netting rabbits in the sand-banks. They were intended for sale in the interior, and many dozens were already taken. Formerly the skins were valuable, and a well-stocked burrow was a valuable appendage to a country gentleman; but of late these furs have fallen so considerably in value, that the warren does not produce a tithe of what it did, "when Boney, the Lord speed him! was uppermost." Indeed, many a hearty lament is made in Ballycroy for poor Napoleon, and his name is ever associated with times of past prosperity.

I cannot describe the melancholy reflections which crowded over my mind, as I squibbed off my barrels on the beach, while the boat was crossing the channel to carry us over the estuary. It was for *the last time*, and with that thought, all the happy days I spent by "flood and fell," passed over my memory in "shadowy review." The jovial commander, the burly priest, my merry cousin, the stern homicide, the ancient butler, and the defunct otter-killer, all were before me. I trod in fancy the banks of Pullgarrow, or couched among the rocks of our highland ambuscade; I saw the startled pack spring from the purple heather, while the red deer,

> Like crested leader proud and high,
> Toss'd his beam'd frontlet to the sky;
> A moment gazed adown the dale,
> A moment snuff'd the tainted gale—

and vanished in the rocky pass of Meeltramoe. My imaginary wanderings continued until we landed at the pier, and with a deep sigh I hastened to my chamber, to

make, for the last time, my toilet after a day of sylvan exercise.

* * * * *

Morning—the last morning has arrived, and all is bustle and packing up. Travers, though a cold-blooded Englishman, who scarcely can tell a grouse from a game-cock, seems to feel regret at leaving this hospitable cabin—old John is sensibly affected—and Alice's black eyes are dim with weeping. For once, she kissed me without coquetry, and as she received my farewell present, invoked the Lord to bless me with such unaffected ardour, as proved that her fervent benison came warmly from the heart.

Over the parting with this rude but affectionate family I shall hurry. My cousin accompanied me to Westport, and we left the lodge after an early dinner, in full expectation of reaching that town for supper, though the distance is some ten or twelve leagues, and by an intricate passage with very difficult and perplexing tides. As if fortune wished to offer me a parting compliment, the wind blew from the north-west, and there was as much of it as we could well carry our full sails to. We entered the Bull's Mouth at three-quarter tide, and brought plenty of water over the sands, and in an hour cleared the sound, and rushing through the boiling currents of Bearnaglee, found ourselves in Clew Bay. The wind blew fresh and steadily, and at nine o'clock we were moored along the quay of Westport.

One incident occurred; at a rocky point which ran from the Achil side into the sound, and there narrowed the channel considerably, we observed a human being couched on a stone among the sea-weed. The deep water passed within an oar's length of the spot, and as the boat flew like a falcon past the point, the man rose and hailed us. We hove the hooker to. It was Hennessey—and nothing could dissuade him, notwithstanding the risk was considerable, from coming on board to give me a parting escort.

Early next morning I found myself in his majesty's mail, and with many a sincere adieu, bade farewell to my kind cousin and his wild but warm-hearted followers.

LETTER XLIII.

Moral and Physical Condition of the West, Past and Present.

Dublin, Bilton's.

Here I am safely over the Shannon: a laudable improvement in the mode and rate of travelling of the Westport mail facilitates one's intercourse with the kingdom of Connaught; and in course of time I have little doubt but Erris will be as approachable as Upper Canada, or any of the remoter provinces.

After my rambling observations upon men and manners, you must permit me, like the last lawyer in a cause, to condense the evidence, and make a general wind-up.

With regard to the moral condition of the West I cannot conscientiously assert that any great improvement will be traced for the last half century. The two great classes, the gentry and peasantry, have undergone a mighty revolution in conduct, manners, and modes of thinking; and yet one will look in vain for commensurate advantages. It is admitted that the former body have changed their generic character altogether. We have the old school stigmatized now for its aristocratic tyranny and petty assumption; and many a modern squire blesses God that he is not as others were who preceded him. And yet our fathers were, I verily believe, wiser in their generation, and better fitted for their own times, than we. True, these days were little better than barbarous. Denis Browne, and Dick Martin, and Bowes Daly, and many a far-famed name of minor note, were then in all their glory, and they lived, it must be acknowledged, in very curious times. In those days, the qualifications of a representative were determined by wager of battle, and a rival for senatorial fame was probably requested by the old member to

provide his coffin before he addressed the county. Doctors rode on horseback over the country in cauliflower-wigs and cocked-hats; and if they differed about a dose or a decoction, referred the dispute to mortal arbitrament. In these happy times, a client would shoot his counsellor if he lost a cause—the suitor sought his mistress at pistol point—and there was but one universal panacea for every known evil, one grand remedy for all injuries and insults.

It was then, indeed, a bustling world. Men fought often, drank deep, and played high; ran in debt, as a matter of course; scattered fairs and markets at their good pleasure; put tenants in the stocks *ad libitum;* and cared no more for the liberty of the subject than they did for the king's writ. Yet were they merry times. Under all these desperate oppressions, the tenants throve and the peasantry were comfortable. Every village could point out its rich man—every cabin had food sufficient for its occupants. When the rent was required it was ready; and though a man was sometimes in the guard-house, his cow was rarely in the pound. *Tempora mutantur!* Who dare now infringe upon the liberty of the subject? "Who put my man i' the stocks?" would be hallooed from Dingle to Cape Clear. Doubtless, civil rights are now most scrupulously protected; but I suspect, that food is abridged in about the same proportion that freedom is extended.

There was one class of persons who, in these old-world times were conspicuously troublesome, who have since then fortunately disappeared. These were a nominal description of gentry, the proprietors of little properties called *fodeeins*, who continued the names and barbarisms of their progenitors. Without industry, without education, they arrogated a certain place in society, and idly imitated the wealthier in their vices. Poverty and distress were natural results, and desperate means were used to keep up appearances. The wretched serfs whom they called their tenants were ground to powder, till, happily for society, the *fodeeins* passed into other hands, and the name and place ceased to be remembered. The ivied walls, and numerous and slender chimneys one sees in

passing through this country, will in nine out of ten cases point a moral of this sort.

In times like those of forty years ago, this extinct tribe were, from the peculiar temper and formation of society, occasionally a sad nuisance. The lord of a *fodeein*, like Captain Mac Turk, was "precisely that sort of person who is ready to fight with any one; whom no one can find an apology for declining to fight with; in fighting with whom considerable danger is incurred; and lastly, through fighting with whom, no *éclat* or credit could redound to the antagonist." Hence, generally, the large proprietors saw this class sink by degrees without an attempt to uphold them, and the *fodeein*, to the great joy of the unhappy devils who farmed it, was appended by general consent to the next estate.

Many examples of dangerous and illegal authority, as usurped and exercised by the aristocracy within the last half-century, are on record, that would appear mere romance to a stranger. One of the Fitzgerald family was probably more remarkable than any person of his times. He was the terror of the upper classes—and to such as arrogated the privileges of the aristocracy, without, as he opined, a prescriptive right, he was the very devil. If a man aspired to become a duellist, or even joined the hounds without being of the proper *caste*, George Robert would flog him from the field without ceremony. He actually for years maintained an armed banditti, imprisoned his own father, took off persons who were obnoxious—and when he was hanged—and fortunately for society this eventually occurred—it required a grand cavalry and artillery movement from Athlone to effect it.

Denis Browne was an autocrat of another description; a useful blundering bear, who did all as religiously in the king's name, as ever Mussulman in that of the prophet. He did much good and some mischief—imprisoned and transported as he pleased, and the peasantry to this day will tell you, that he could hang any one whom he disliked. Yet both these men were favourites with their tenantry, and under them their dependants prospered and waxed wealthy.

Sometimes the memoir of an individual will give a more graphic picture of the age wherein he flourished

than a more elaborate detail; and in the strange and eventful histories of these two singular men, the leading characters of their times will be best portrayed.

No persons were more dissimilar—none were bitterer enemies—none in every point, personal and physical, were more essentially opposite. In one point alone there was a parallel—both were tyrants in disposition, and both would possess power, no matter at what price.

George Robert Fitzgerald was middle-sized and slightly but actively formed; his features were regular, his address elegant, and his manners formed in the best style of the French school. In vain the physiognomist would seek in his handsome countenance for some trace of that fierce and turbulent disposition which marked his short and miserable career. No one, when he pleased it, could delight society more; and with the fair sex he was proverbially successful. It is said that gallantry however was not his forte, and that he seldom used his persuasive powers with women, but for objects ultimately pecuniary or ambitious.

Added to his external advantages, he was an educated man; and that he possessed no mean literary talent, may be inferred from his celebrated "Apology," which is neatly and spiritedly written.

His courage was undoubted. In Paris and London he was noted as a duellist: and in Mayo, his personal encounters are still remembered. His duel with Doctor Martin, his encounter with Cæsar French, the most notorious fire-eaters of the day, placed him foremost in that class. He was moreover a dead shot, and reported to be one of the ablest swordsmen in the kingdom. As a sportsman he was justly celebrated. He was an elegant horseman, and his desperate riding was the theme of fox-hunters for many a year. No park wall or flooded river stopped him—and to this day, leaps that he surmounted, and points where he crossed the Turlough River, are pointed out by the peasantry.

The dark act which clouded his memory, and his unhappy fate, are generally known; and considering the other traits of his strange and mingled character, the apology offered by his friends on the score of occasional insanity is not improbable. One circumstance would strengthen

this conclusion. He was interred by night, and with so much privacy, in the old church-yard of Turlough, that the place where his remains lay was for a time uncertain. Accident in some degree revealed it. In the confusion attending upon his hurried sepulture, it is said that a ring was forgotten and left upon the finger. Afterward, in opening the ground, this relic was discovered; and what more satisfactorily proved it, was, that the scull was distinctly fractured; and it was a matter well known that Fitzgerald had been dangerously wounded by a pistol bullet in the head, in one of his numerous and sanguinary duels on the Continent.

Denis Browne, when a young man, is said to have been extremely handsome; but early in life he become corpulent, and engrossed in other pursuits, gradually careless and slovenly in his person, and neglected any means to restrain his constitutional obesity. To strong natural abilities, he united decision of character and mental energy. He started in dangerous times; several influential families disputed political power with him—he had a fierce and dangerous aristocracy to overcome—men cold to every argument "but the last and worst one," the pistol. Hence in the very outset of his voyage, his vessel all but foundered. It was his first contest for the county, and he was opposed by the late Lord Clanmorris. The Bingham party was bold and powerful, and after a protracted contest, matters looked gloomily enough, and the Brownes were likely to be defeated.

"In this dilemma," to use his own words, "I applied to Counsellor ———, my legal adviser. I told him how badly things were, and inquired what was to be done?

"'My dear Denis,' said he, with a grave and serious movement of his full-bottomed wig, 'the thing admits but one remedy, and that lies in a nut-shell. You are one-and-twenty years old, and you have never yet been on the sod—Why, that one fact would lose you your election—you must fight, my dear boy.'

"'Fight! to be sure I will, when I'm insulted.'

"'Of course you would, and so would anybody—but you must fight, and that too this very evening.'

"'Impossible! how could it be managed?'

"'How! arrah whist, Denis!—maybe ye think I have nothing but law in my head: you must knock down Bingham!'

"'Knock down a man who never offended me—with whom I have no dispute?'

"'And what does this matter? the blow will settle that difficulty. But as you are particular, can't ye say some friend of his affronted one of yours—some devil you never heard of will answer—and as John Bingham is a reasonable man, he'd not lose time in asking idle questions.'

"Accordingly, I followed this excellent advice, struck Bingham on the steps of the court-house, was called out in half an hour, fought in the barrack-yard, was there wounded and won my election."

From that period, Denis Browne rose rapidly into power. His able brother the Marquis of Sligo, supported him with all his influence and talent. Denis overcame every obstacle, distanced every competitor, and at last was absolute in authority, dictator for twenty years, and ruled the county during that period with a rod of iron.

No one was warmer in his friendships or more virulent in his antipathies. These feelings blinded his better judgment, and many of his greatest mistakes arose from an anxiety to aggrandize a favourite or annoy an enemy. He unfortunately outlived his power, and that circumstance imbittered his latter years. He had not resolution to quit public life, while he might have retired from it with *éclat;* he saw his influence expire, and his power partitioned insensibly among men, with whom, but a few years before his will was law.

In private life Denis Browne was cheerful and hospitable. Full of anecdote, an excellent story-teller, one who had mixed largely with the world and knew mankind intimately, he was an amusing and instructive companion. Young and lively society he delighted in; and though from increased corpulency, and all the "ills that flesh is heir to," life was latterly a burthen, the mind was vigorous to the last—and the death-bed of Denis Browne was marked with a firmness and philosophy that was in

perfect keeping with the energy and determination of his life.

Another order of things has succeeded. Men talk now with horror of acts of oppression and arbitrary power, which then every country justice committed; but after all, the times have changed for the worse—and the outcry about invaded rights and an enslaved population, was, after all, mere verbiage, "signifying nothing."

The last fading gleam of western prosperity was during the power of Napoleon, and with his dynasty it vanished. The terrible change from war to peace; the bursting of the banking bubbles which supplied for that time an imaginary capital; over-population and high rents, have ruined this wild district, and reduced its peasantry, with few exceptions, to abject wretchedness and want.

Is there for this any remedy? Cannot modern landlords, acting on what they would call enlightened principles, remove the causes of distress, and restore the peasantry to that scale of comfort they enjoyed under the rude and tyrannical *régime* of their fathers? *They cannot.* They will talk "scholarly" of tithes and local taxation, and vainly attribute the insolvency of their tenants to these and such like causes; this is *vox et præterea nihil*—an unreal and fanciful conceit. The true cause of the misery of the western population, is over-population and excessive rents; and before the peasantry could be tolerably comfortable, the lands must on the average be lowered at least *one-third.* Even then, at present prices, the occupant will be hardly able to manage to pay the rent and live.

But can the landlords do this? Can they afford to equalize their rental to the times, and throw a third portion from their nominal income overboard? *They cannot.* The majority of the owners of western estrtes, from family burdens and national unthriftiness, are heavily and hopelessly encumbered; and a reduction on such scale as would be necessary to ensure their tenants' comforts, would completely pauperize themselves. Hence, to keep off the evil day, every pretext but the true one will be assigned for local wretchedness—and every reason but the right one offered to the starving tenant, to persuade

him that ruinous rents will never occasion want and poverty.

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In personal appearance, the western peasantry are very inferior to those of the other divisions of the kingdom. Generally, they are under-sized, and by no means so good-looking as their southern neighbours—and I would say in other points they are equally deficient. To overcome their early lounging gait and slovenly habits, is found by military men a troublesome task; and while the Tipperary man speedily passes through the hands of the drill-serjeant, the Mayo peasant requires a long and patient ordeal, before a martial carriage can be acquired, and he be perfectly *set-up* as a soldier. These defects once conquered, none are better calculated for the profession. Hardy, active, patient in wet and cold, and accustomed to indifferent and irregular food, he is admirably adapted to endure the privations and fatigue incident to a soldier's life on active service,—and in dash and daring, no regiments in the service hold a prouder place than those which appertain to the kingdom of Connaught.

It is said, that the physical appearance of the Irish peasantry deteriorates as the northern and western sea-coasts are approached; and certainly on the latter, the population are very inferior to that of the adjacent counties. Even the inhabitants of different baronies in the same county, as their locality advances inland, will be found to differ materially; and in an extensive cattle-fair, the islander will be as easily distinguished from the borderer, whether he be on the Galway or Roscommon frontier, as from the stock-master of Leinster, or the jobber *from the north*.

Indeed, fifty years back, the communication between the islands and the interior was so difficult and unfrequent, that the respective occupants looked on each other as very strangers. Naturally, slowly as civilization crept westward, the islands and remoter coasts from local causes were last visited, and many curious circumstances to this day would prove it. In this age of machinery, when the minutest matters are produced by its agencies,

and the lowest occupations of human labour are transacted by powers unknown to our fathers, there are extensive tracts upon the western portions of the island, where even a mill has never been erected, and where the corn is prepared for distillation or food by the same rude methods used by barbarous nations one thousand years ago. Trituration between two stones by the hand labour of an individual, is the means employed to reduce the corn into meal; and the use of that ancient hand-mill the *querne*, is still general throughout Ballycroy and the islands on the coast.

The inhabitants of these districts are extremely hospitable to passing travellers, but by no means fond of encouraging strangers to sojurn permanently among them. This latter inherent prejudice may arise from *clannish* feelings, or ancient recollections of how much their ancestors were spoliated by former settlers, who by artifice and the strong hand managed to possess the better portions of the country. They are also absurdly curious, and will press their questions with American pertinacity, until, if possible, the name, rank and occasion of his visit is fully and faithfully detailed by the persecuted traveller.

The credulity of these wild people is amazing, and their avidity for news, if possible, exceeded by the profound reliance they place in the truth of the intelligence. Hence, the most absurd versions of passing events circulate over the district—and reports prevail, by turns, of a ridiculous or mischievous tendency, generally according to the mental temperament of the story-teller.

It formerly was not uncommon for people in the islands to live and die without ever having seen a town. Of course, they were a simple and unsophisticated race —and their natural mistakes, if they did by accident come in collision with other beings, were the source of many an inland jest. One very old story is told in which an Achil man is the hero—and as to its truth, old Antony would as soon have doubted the existence of the holy trout in Kilgeever, as have questioned its authenticity.*

* A sacred well in the west, tenanted by a trout of surpassing sanctity.

An islander was once obliged to go into the town of Castlebar upon business; and among other marvellous things which there met his sight, he was particularly struck with the appearance of an earthen jar in a shop-window. He inquired what this unknown article might be, and was informed that it was a mare's egg, which, if placed beside the fire during the winter, would infallibly produce a foal the ensuing spring. The price was moderate, and the Achil man determined to possess the treasure, aud thus become master of a horse. Having effected the purchase, he set out on his way rejoicing—and before evening fell, came within view of his own home, and sat down upon a heathy bank to rest himself. He placed his recent acquisition beside him—but alas! from its spherical form, it rolled down the hill, and striking against a rock at the bottom, was shivered by the blow. A hare, which had couched beneath the stone, startled at the crash, sprang from her form and went off at speed. The unhappy Achil man gazed, in an agony of despair, after what he believed the emancipated quadruped—and then exclaimed with a bitter groan, "*Mona mon diaoul!* What a horse he would have been!—Lord! if he was but two years old! *the Devil himself would not catch him.*"

Now, the most curious part of this story is, that although a standing joke upon Achil simplicity for a century, it is to be found *verbatim* in a German jest-book, with this only difference, that a *gourd* is there substituted for a *jar*.

In alluding to the strange employments of the female peasantry, I noticed those coarse and laborious exercises, which elsewhere are invariably confined to the lords of the creation. That the appearance of the fair inhabitants of the western highlands should harmonize with their rude avocations might be expected; and hence the female peasantry, in personal advantages, are very inferior indeed to those of the interior. The constant exposure to sun and storm injures the complexion, and gives them an old and faded look; and the habit of dispensing with shoes renders the feet large and misshapen. Among the *coriphées* who frequented our mountain balls, there was

but one girl who might be termed decidedly handsome. Her face was uncommonly intelligent—I never saw so dark an eye, and her teeth were white as ivory. But there was a natural ease in all she did—whether she brought a pitcher from the spring, or danced a merry strathspey, every movement was graceful. Even her simple toilet evinced instinctive taste, though no corset was required to regulate a form moulded by the hand of Nature, and her magnificent hair boasted no arrangement beyond the simple cincture of a ribbon—

> But seldom was a snood amid
> Such wild luxuriant ringlets hid,
> Whose glossy black to shame might bring
> The plumage of the raven's wing.

And yet I have seen that young beauty bending beneath a basket of potatoes which would have overloaded me—and on one occasion carry a strapping fellow across the river, who was coming on some state affair to the cabin, which, as he conceived, required him to appear in the presence with dry legs.

On the score of propriety of conduct, I would assign the female peasantry of this district a high place. When the habits of the country are considered, one would be inclined to suspect, that excessive drinking, and the frequent scenes of nocturnal festivity which wakes and dances present, would naturally lead to much immorality. This, however, is not the case:—broken vows will no doubt occasionally require the interference of the magistrate or the priest;—but generally the lover makes the only reparation in his power, and deceived females and deserted children are seldom seen in Erris.

LETTER XLIV.

Hunting—Men—Horses and Hounds—Game—Conclusion.

If ever a district were designed by nature for field-sports, a person, from even a cursory glance upon the map, would point to Mayo. Its great extent of mountain surface, interspersed with bogs and morasses—its numerous and expansive waters—and its large tracts of downs and feeding grounds, render it available for every purpose of the sportsman; and few species of game indigenous to Britain, in their peculiar seasons will here be sought in vain.

As a hunting country, *the plains* have been justly chronicled—and the adjacent counties of Galway and Roscommon yield to none in the empire. The extensive sheep-farms afford superior galloping ground—and the fences, though few and far between, from their size and character, require a powerful horse and dashing rider. Hence in the annals of fox-hunting, the bipeds and quadrupeds of Connaught are held in due estimation; and it has been stated without contradiction, than in their *own country* no men or horses can compete with them.

During the last century, the west of Ireland was celebrated for its breed of horses. They were of that class denominated "the old Irish hunter,"—a strong, well-boned, and enduring animal, that, without any pretension to extraordinary speed, was sufficiently fast for fox-hounds, an excellent weight-carrier, and better still, able to live with any dogs and in any country. As *fencers* this breed was unequalled; and for a crack hunter to carry ten or eleven stone over *six feet six* of solid masonry, was no extraordinary event;—*seven* feet has been achieved repeatedly—and they are still, I have no doubt, many horses in the province, capable of performing the latter feat. But alas! this noted class of hunters are now comparatively rare—a higher-blooded,

and as all admit, an inferior caste, has been substituted—the racing hunter fills the stables that formerly were occupied by the old Roscommon weight-carrier—and in a few years, this celebrated and valuable animal will be seldom seen. The number of English thorough-bred horses introduced within the last thirty years into the Connaught racing studs, gradually introduced a slight and unserviceable hybrid—and, too late, gentlemen discovered the error of endeavouring to procure a cross, which should combine increased speed with those durable qualities that alone can enable a horse, under reasonable weight, to live with fast hounds in a country where they can go for miles without a check, and where the leaps are always severe, and occasionally tremendous.

Of the riders, it may be observed, that much as Connaught has been celebrated for desperate horsemanship, no charge of degeneracy will lie against the present race. To the curious in break-neck fencing, I would recommend a sojourn with a Connaught club—or if that should be inconvenient, a visit to the steeple-chases on *the plains* or at Knockcroghery would be sufficient—he will there see six *six feet walls* especially built "for the nonce," under the inspection of conscientious stewards, who would give nothing but honest measure, taken at racing speed, and that too in the middle of a bunch of gentlemen, who would ride over an adopted child;—or let him join a drag after a champaign lunch at Lord C.'s;—let him do this, and then form his estimate of Connaught horsemanship.

A mistake prevails in England, as to the supposed inferiority in value, of the horses commonly employed by the Western sportsman. I have seen a field out, when, of twelve horses, ten would probably average at one hundred guineas each; and the remaining two (brothers, Jerry and Lancet) were reported to have cost the noble owner five hundred guineas apiece. When the dangers of a stone-wall country and the desperate riding of the men are considered, these are indeed sporting prices. And yet accidents of a serious character are not frequent; every horse that has been ridden to hounds is generally

blemished more or less—but it is astonishing in such a country and with such riders, how long some noted hunters have lasted.

The hounds, with few exceptions, are inferior. They are properly kennelled, or regularly hunted. Masters of hounds in the west, seem careless to all considerations beyond having a pack that can *go high* and keep tolerably well together. In sizing and draughting dogs* they are by no means particular, and hence the *ensemble* of many a kennel is materially injured. In home management and field turn-out, they are infinitely behind their English brethren:—the packs are carelessly hunted—the kennel servants badly appointed—and I have met men upon the plains, able to take a horse over any thing that hand and heart could carry him, who to a stranger would appear, from "the wildness of their attire," to be desperate apprentices levanting with their master's property.

And yet, after this eulogy upon the splendid horsemanship of the western gentlemen, it may appear singular that I add, few of them ride well to hounds. An impatience in the field, and the anxiety to be foremost where all are forward, interferes constantly with the dogs, and causes a pressure upon the pack very unfavourable to good hunting. Riding rather *at the field* than to the hounds, is the prevailing error. Fences are crossed which would be better evaded—horses unnecessarily distressed; and I have seen a man actually go out of his way to take a regular *rasper*, where he had a *gap* within thirty yards.

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* The same remark may be made respecting the setters and pointers in general use among the Connaught sportsmen. Many admirable dogs will be met occasionally—but there appears to be little pains taken in matching the females, and in the same kennel you will find an intermixture of different and discordant stocks. Not unfrequently I have seen a man shooting to setters, pointers, and droppers on the same heath, and hunting all indiscriminately.

As to grayhounds, they are in little request, excepting in the mountain districts—and those principally kept are of the rough and wiry species, or the small smooth breed, which from their lightness are best adapted for the soft bogs which form the coursing-grounds.

Game in Mayo would be much more abundant than it is, were it not sadly thinned by irregular shooters, and an infinity of vermin. To prevent the spoliations of the former would be a difficult task—as from the quantity of wild-fowl that every winter brings to the western shores, a number of *guerilla* sportsmen are employed or countenanced by the resident gentry; to whom it is too strong a temptation, when lying for ducks, or stealing upon plover, to discover a pack or covey grouped upon the snow, and yet have sufficient philosophy to keep the finger from the trigger. The vermin, however, are the main cause of the scarcity of game, and no means are taken to destroy these marauders. From the eagle to the sparrow-hawk, every variety abounds in the woods and mountains, and every species of kite and crow that an ornithologist would admire, and a sportsman abominate, infests the western counties.

Of fallow-deer, there is a large stock in the parks throughout the province—and buck-hunting has of late seasons been getting into fashion on *the plains*. I have already, in speaking of the red-deer, lamented the prospect of their extinction. That event I look upon as fast approaching—and I am convinced that nothing can avert this national calamity, but a vigorous determination of the mountain proprietors, to extend protection to those limited herds, which are still found, though in lessened numbers, upon the Alpine heights bordering on Burrishoole and Tyrawley.

Foxes are tolerably abundant in the hunting districts, and mischievously so in the mountains and islands. From the latter any quantity could be procured, and there is no place in Britain where covers could be so easily formed and stocked with less trouble and expense. I have seen healthy foxes for days hawked over the country before a purchaser could be found, and at last disposed of for a few shillings. I once bought a fine dog fox for half a crown, and had I not become his owner, I verily believe the captor must have turned him out upon the street.

Hares are in most places tolerably plenty; in point of numbers differing according to local situation and the relative protection afforded to them. In the moors, the

mountain hares are scarce; but from the quantity of winged and four-footed vermin, it is surprising that so many are occasionally seen.

Rabbits abound in the west of Ireland. On the coast, the immense sand-banks are for miles perforated with their burrows—and notwithstanding that they are unmercifully abandoned to cur-dogs, cats, and vermin, their number continues unabated. In the woods and coppices bush-rabbits are numerous, and cover-shooters when beating for woodcocks, will have their amusements diversified by many a running shot.

Other wild animals in every variety may be met with in parts of Connaught. Badgers and wild cats, martins and weasels will be found in their customary haunts—while on the coasts and estuaries, the lakes and inland waters, seals and otters are plentiful in the extreme.

Of winged game, pheasants and partridges excepted, I have already spoken. With regard to the first, they are scarce, and, it would appear, difficult to rear in this moist and stormy climate. I speak only of the places contiguous to the coast, where the experiment has been tried for inland, where they have been duly attended to and the English system adopted, they have thriven amazingly. As to partridges they are generally scarce, and in Erris and Ballycroy almost unknown. In the wheat countries, and especially in certain parts of Galway I believe they are tolerably abundant—but by comparison with the quantity a sportsman meets in an English beat, the best partridge-shooting procurable in Connaught will be very indifferent indeed.

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My task is ended—I have chronicled "the short but simple annals" of a sporting summer, passed in a remote and unfrequented corner of the earth, and protracted until "winter and rough weather" forbade a longer stay. Into these solitudes I carried prejudices as unfair as they were unfavourable—I came prepared to dislike a people who, unhappily for themselves, are little known and less regarded. I found my estimate of their character false, for kindnesses were returned tenfold, and the native outbreakings of Milesian hospitality met me at every

step. What though the mountaineer had nothing but his potato-basket to offer—it was freely open to my hand. Did I wander from the road? his loy* was left in the furrow, and he ran miles to put me in the right path. If it rained and I sheltered in a cabin, the hearth was swept, the driest log placed upon the fire, and the bed-covering taken off to keep my saddle from the shower. If possible, my wishes were anticipated—and labour was unheeded when my pleasure or comfort could be attained.

One incident I must mention, for it marks the character of this simple and devoted peasantry. It was the hottest of the dog-days, and we toiled over a barren moor, and missed some packs that we were aware were in that neighbourhood. A hill of most discouraging altitude was before us—and as its face was difficult beyond description, I hesitated to attempt it. But beyond it was a land of promise—a valley where wonders might be expected—and *malgré* fatigue, I *did* muster courage for the ascent. I gave my gun to a young peasant who acted as my henchman, and, as he was already loaded heavily, I observed him stagger more than once before we gained the summit. Throughout the day he never left my side—when the river was to be forded, he led the way—and yet I observed that he was unsually flushed, and at times sighed heavily. When we reached the cabin, he tottered to a seat, and the next moment became insensible. Then, and not till then, the truth was disclosed: he had been attacked with measles on the preceding night; but rather than surrender his post to another, he actually, and under the fever of the disease, worked for twelve hours beneath a burning sun. Old Antony, by some simple means, brought the eruption plentifully to the skin, and in another week my gallant henchman was at my side, without any apparent trace of lassitude.

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I have left these mountains, and never shall I enjoy the unalloyed excitement—the calm luxurious solitude, which I found among their wastes. What has refinement to

* *Loy*, a narrow spade.

offer me in exchange? Will the overstocked preserve replace the moorland *chase*, with its glorious ridge of purple highlands—its silver lake, and sparkling river—my wild followers—my tried friends—and the dear cabin and its snowy tent, peeping from the dark expanse of heather, like a white sea-bird from the lap of ocean? Alas! nothing will compensate for these—or give me an equivalent for the joyous intercourse with kindred spirits, which I realized and left in *the wilds of Ballycroy*.

APPENDIX.

No. I.—Page 9.

"In this pursuit (snipe-shooting), I sank more than once in a quagmire, where the Prince's whipper-in some years since was hesitating whether he should go to the assistance of some hounds, which had got an old stag at bay; but on his master's asking him if he were afraid, he immediately dashed in, and sunk to rise no more! It is indeed reported, that neither himself nor his horse were ever found; but the English groom told me they were got out, with much difficulty, some days after the accident had happened."—*Thornton, vol. 2, p.* 113.

No. II.—Page 10.

This weapon, I believe, was almost confined to the West of Ireland, and at this time is rarely met with. Yet some centuries back, it was as constantly borne by the Milesians, as the dirk in the Highlands, and the stiletto in Italy. All the legendary tales of blood usually employ it as the means of violence; and old Antony says that in his youth, the old people shuddered when they named it. I never saw but one; it was a broad bladed dagger, about fifteen inches long, of clumsy workmanship, and hafted with a piece of deer's horn. From the formidable figure *the middoge* cuts in ancient chronicles, the temper of the blade was supposed to be superior to any weapon forged in these degenerate days; and I heard an old man assert that he had seen one, which, when held up and let fall perpendicularly but a few feet, would pierce through *three half-crown pieces—Credat Judæus!*—This interesting and valuable implement, according to his account, was lost "during the French," that is at the period of the French invasion in 98.

No. III.—Page 14.

SPANISH BARRELS.

"*Spanish barrels* have always been held in great esteem,

as well on account of the quality of the iron, which is generally considered the best in Europe, as because they possess the reputation of being forged and bored more perfectly than any others. It should be observed, however, that of the Spanish barrels, those only that are made in the capital are accounted truly valuable; in consequence of which, a great many have been made at other places, especially in Catalonia and Biscay, with the names and marks of the Madrid gunsmiths; they are also counterfeited at Liege, Prague, Munich, &c. and a person must be a good judge not to be deceived by these spurious barrels.

"Notwithstanding there have always been excellent gunsmiths at Madrid, yet the barrels which bear the highest price, and are most sought after by the curious in this day, are those made by artists who have been dead for many years; though perhaps this preference has no better foundation than the common prejudice in favour of things that are the productions of remote ages or distant countries. *Major è longinquo reverentia.* Such are the barrels of Nicholas Biz, who was famous at Madrid in the beginning of the seventeenth century, and died 1724. Those he made in the former part of his life are the most esteemed. The barrels of Juan Belen and Juan Fernandez, contemporaries of Nicholas Biz, are not less prized; and in France all of them sell for 1000 livres, or 43*l.* 15*s.* sterling. Those of Diego Esquibel, Alonzo Martinez, Gabriel Agora, Agostin Ortiz, Mathias Varae, Luis Santos, Juan Santos, Francisco Garcia, Francisco Targarone, Joseph Cano, and N. Zelaya, all of them celebrated workmen, who succeeded those already mentioned in order of their names, are also in great request.

"Of the artists now (1780) or lately living at Madrid, the most celebrated are, Francisco Lopes, Salvador Cenaro, and Miguel Zeguarra, gunsmiths to the king; Isidoro Soler and Juan de Soto have also great reputation. The barrels of those living workmen sell for 300 French livres, or somewhat more than 30*l.* sterling, which is the price paid for those made for the king and royal family. They are proved with a treble charge of the best powder, and a quadruple one of swan or deer shot. At Madrid, and throughout all Spain, the manufacture of barrels is not, as in this and most other countries, a separate branch of the gun-making buisness; but the same workmen make and finish every part of the piece.

"After the barrels of Madrid, those of Bustindini and St. Olabe at Placentia, in Biscay, and of Jean and Clement Pe-

droesteva, Eudal Pous, and Martin Marechal, at Barcelona, are the most esteemed; these usually sell in France for 80 French livres, or 3*l.* 10*s.* sterling.

"Almost all the barrels made at Madrid are composed of the old shoes of horses and mules, collected for the purpose. They are all welded longitudinally; but instead of being forged in one plate or piece, as in other countries, they are made, like the English twisted barrels, in five or six detached portions, which are afterwards welded one to the end of another, two of them forming the breech or reinforced part of the barrel. We may form some idea of the very great purity to which the iron is brought in the course of the operation, when we are told, that to make a barrel, which, rough from the forge, weighs only six or seven pounds, they employ a mass of mule shoe iron weighing from forty to forty-five pounds; so that from thirty-four to thirty-eight pounds are lost in the heatings and hammerings it is made to undergo before it is forged into a barrel.

* * * * * *

"Notwithstanding the great reputation of the Spanish barrels, however, they are little used in France, and still less in England; their awkward form, and their great length and weight, being strong objections to them, especially since they have begun to make their pieces so very light and short in these countries. And from our own experience of the Spanish barrels, we are convinced that the avidity with which they are sought after by some persons, and the extravagant prices that are given for them, proceed more from a fancied, than from any real superiority they possess over those made in this country.

* * * * * *

"The Spanish gunsmiths pique themselves upon the very high polish they give to the inside of their barrels. We have already expressed our doubts about the advantage derived from this; and are still of opinion, that if a barrel is so smooth as not to *lead*, it is better to take it as it comes from the hand of the manufacturer, than allow the gunsmith to practise any further operation upon it. In support of this opinion, Mons. de Marolles informs us that he has seen a barrel rough from the borer throw a charge of shot deeper into a quire of paper than another barrel that was highly polished within, although the length, the bore, and the charge were the same in both." —*Essay on Shooting.*

No. IV.—Page 17.

The boulies, in the mountain districts, are an interesting remnant of antiquity; and refer evidently to that period when Ireland was in its wild and unsettled state. They are simply one or more temporary *sheilings*, or huts, constructed with rude materials, in spots the most convenient for attending to the cattle in the summer and autumn, when they are allowed to depasture on the mountains.

According to the usual leases granted by the landlord to the tenant in this wild country, villages in the lowlands or on the coast have a reserved right of pasturage on particular portions of the adjacent hills; and in some cases the distance from the tenant's habitation to this mountain pasturage will exceed a dozen miles. Hence, it is impossible to pay the requisite attention to the cattle without residing on the spot; and a part of the family, generally the young girls, are detached to *bivouac* in the hills, and attend to the herding and milking of the cows.

These huts are always erected in lone and beautiful valleys, generally on the bank of a rivulet, and placed beneath the shelter of a cliff. When the season closes, they are deserted until the following year; and a few hours' work suffices to render them habitable, when the returning summer obliges the fair villagers to resume their wild and pastoral employment.

* * * * * *

"*Irenæus.*—I will begin, then, to count their customes in the same order that I counted their nations; and first with the Scythian, or Scottish manners. Of the which there is one use among them to keep their cattle, and to live themselves the most part of the year in boolies, pasturing upon the mountaines and waste wild places; and removing still to waste landes, as they have depastured the former. The which appertaineth plain to be the manner of the Scythians, as you may read in Olaus Magnus and John Bohemas, and yet is used among all the Tartarians and the people about the Caspian Sea, which are naturally Scythians, to live in heards, as they call them, being the very same that the Irish boolies are, driving their cattle continually with them, and feeding on their milke and white meates.

"*Eudoxius.*—What fault can you find with this custome? for though it may be an old Scythian use, yet it is very behoofeful in this country of Ireland, where there are great mountaines and waste deserts full of grasse that the same

should be eaten downe and nourish many thousandes of cattle for the good of the whole realme, which cannot (methinks) well be any other way than by keeping these boolies there as you have shewed.

"*Iren.*—But by this custom of *boolying* there grows in the mean time many great enormities unto that Commonwealth. For first, if there be any outlawes, or loose people (as there are never without some), which live upon stealthe and spoyle, they are evermore succoured and finde reliefe only in these boolies being upon the waste places, whereas else they should be driven shortly to starve, or to come downe to the townes to seek reliefe, where, by one mean or other, they would soone be caught. Besides, such stealthe of cattle as they make, they bring commonly to those boolies, being upon the waste places, where they are readily received, and the thief harboured from danger of law, or such officers as might light on him. Moreover, the people that thus live in those boolies, grow thereby the more barbarous, and live more licentiously than they could in townes, using what means they list, and practising what mischiefes and villainy they will, either against the government there by their combynations, or against private men, whom they maligne by stealing their goods, or murdering themselves; for there they thinke themselves half exempted from law and obedience, and after having once tasted freedom, doe like a steere that hath been long out of his yoke, grudge and repine ever after to come under rule againe.

"*Eudoxius.*—By your speech, Irenæus, I perceive more evil come by this use of boolies, than good by their grasing, and therefore it may well be reformed."—*p.* 35.

* * * * *

"For this keeping of cowes is of itself a very idle life, and a fit nurserie for a thiefe, for which cause (you remember) I disliked the *Irish* manner of keeping *boolies* in summer upon the mountaines, and living after that savage sort."—*Spenser's View*, 1596, *p.* 110.

No. V.—Page 43.

There is a strange coincidence between the master otter of the Irish, and the Jungunus crocodile of the Javanese.

"When she" (the female slave) "was desired to describe this paternal uncle, who, in so strange a shape, had taken up his dwelling in the water, she said he was not like other crocodiles, but much handsomer; that his body was spotted,

and his nose red; that he had bracelets of gold upon his feet, and ear-rings of the same metal in his ears. Mr. Banks heard this tale of ridiculous falsehood patiently to the end, and then dismissed the girl, without reminding her that a crocodile with ears, was as strange a monster as a dog with cloven feet. Some time after this, a servant whom Mr. Banks had hired at Batavia, and who was the son of a Dutchman by a Javanese woman, thought fit to acquaint his master that he had seen a crocodile of the same kind, which had also been seen by many others, both Dutchmen and Malays: that being very young, it was but two feet long, and had bracelets of gold upon its feet. 'There is no giving credit to these stories,' said Mr. Banks, 'for I was told the other day that a crocodile had ear-rings; and you know that could not be true, as crocodiles have no ears.'—'Ah! sir,' said the man, 'these *sudara ores* are not like other crocodiles; they have five toes upon each foot, a large tongue that fills their mouth, and ears also; although, indeed, they are very small.' "—*Cook's Voyage.*

No. VI.—Page 45.

While staying at a gentleman's house, I heard when passing the porter's lodge, that the gate-keeper's cow was ill. As she was a fine animal, the loss would have been a serious one to the family, and hence I became interested in her recovery. For several days, however, the report to my inquiry was more unfavourable, and at last the case was considered hopeless.

The following morning as I rode past, I found the family in deep distress. The cow, they said, could not live many hours; and the gate-keeper had gone off to fetch "the charmer," who lived some ten miles distance. I really sympathized with the good woman. The loss of eight or nine guineas to one in humble life is a serious calamity; and from the appearance of the cow I concluded, though not particularly skilful, that the animal would not survive.

That evening I strolled out after dinner. It was sweet moonlight, and I bent my steps to the gate-house to inquire if the cow still lived.

The family were in great tribulation. "The charmer had arrived—had seen the cow—had prepared herbs and nostrums, and was performing some solitary ceremony at an adjacent spring-well, from which he had excluded every member of the family in assisting." I was most curious to observe the

incantation, but was dissuaded by the gate-keeper, who implored me "to give the conjuror fair play."

In five minutes the charmer joined us—he said the case was a bad one, but that he thought he could *bring round* the cow. He then administered the "unhallowed potion," and I left the lodge, expecting to hear next morning that the animal was defunct.

Next day, "the bulletin was favourable; and "the charmer" was in the act of receiving his reward. I looked at him: he was as squalid and heart-broken a wretch in appearance, as ever trod the earth. The cow still seemed weak, but "the charmer" spoke confidently of her recovery. When he left the lodge and turned his steps homeward, I pulled up my horse and waited for him. He would rather have avoided an interview, but could not. "Well, fellow, you have humbugged that poor family, and persuaded them that the cow will recover?"—"I have told them truth," said the charmer, coldly.—"And will your prophecy prove true?" I asked, in a tone of scornful incredulity.—"It will," said he; "but, *God help me! this night I'll pay dearly for it!*" I looked at him—his face was agonized and terror-stricken—he crossed the fence, and disappeared.

When I passed the gate-house on my return, the cow was evidently convalescent; and in a few days she was perfectly well.

I leave the solution of the mystery to the learned; for in uch matters, as they say in Connaught—*Neil an skeil a gau maun.*

No. VII.—Page 52.

When the French, under Humbert, landed at Killala in the autumn of 1798, they brought with them a large quantity of arms and military clothing, to equip the numerous partizans they expected to have found in the country. After the French general was defeated, and the insurrection had been put down, many of the guns which had been distributed among the peasantry were buried, or effectually concealed; and they have been used in poaching and wild-fowl shooting to the present time. The French barrels are said to throw shot much better than those of English muskets. I have never seen their relative merits proved, but imagine that the superiority of the former is owing to their greater length.

No. VIII.—Page 59.

This phrase is used in Ireland to designate that useless and eternal tribe, who are there the regular *attachés* of families of ancient lineage. Nurses, fosterers, discharged servants, decayed sportsmen, and idlers of every sex, age, and calling, come under this description.

There was a higher class of nuisance under the title of *poor relations*, who formerly wandered over Connaught, and from the interminable ramification of the old families, there were few houses into which these worthies had not a right of *entré*. The last one, I recollect when a boy, traversed the country upon a white pony, dressed in a digby black, and arrayed in a cocked-hat; a certain number of houses were under annual requisition, and such was the influence of ancient custom, that none would venture to refuse this forced hospitality, although the man was latterly a sad bore. Some gentlemen, when their "loving cousin" was expected, had his approach observed, and stopped him in the avenue, with an excuse that the house was full, and a subsidy of a few guineas. The money was always acceptable—and whoever unluckily happened to be next number on the visiting list, was favoured with one week additional from my "Cousin Mac."

"Mac," with his brigadier wig and white pony, has gone the way of all flesh, and by travestying a line of Sir Walter Scott, one could add,

"The last of all the *bores* was he."

No. IX.—Page 60.

"As we approached the river, the dog started a large kangaroo, and hunted it down upon the plain. This was a seasonable supply. We immediately commenced cooking; cutting off some steaks, we strung them on a stick, and set them before the fire; when one side was done, we turned the other; this is what they call a *sticker-up*, and our manner of cooking them is called *bush-fashion*."—*Struggles of an Emigrant.*

No. X.—Page 63.

"At this time the number of sick on board amounted to forty, and the rest of the ship's company were in very feeble condition. Every individual had been sick, except the sail-

maker, an old man between seventy and eighty years of age, and it is very remarkable, that this old man, during our stay at this place, was constantly drunk every day."—*Cook's Voyage.*

No. XI.—Page 65.

The Mullet is the grand boundary of the wild peninsula of Erris, and separates it from the interior counties. It is used in a general sense to describe the district—"as within or without *the Mullet.*"

No. XII.—Page 65.

Northmen is a phrase not only applied to recent settlers from the north of Ireland, but even to families who have been located here for centuries. In point of fact, few of the tribes here are purely aboriginal; for Erris and Connemara, being the *Ultima Thule* of the land, every wanderer for private and political offences fled to these havens of refuge, and in course of time amalgamated with the native proprietors of the soil. Hence, to this day, their descendants are not unfrequently taunted with being *novi homines;* and when a delinquency is committed by one of these unhappy hybrids, an aboriginal will probably observe, "Sure, after all, what could be expected from him, considering that his great grandfather was *from the north!*"

No. XIII.—Page 67.

BITTERN.

BOG-BUMPER, BITTER BUM, OR MIRE DRUM.

(*Ardea Stellaris,—Lin. Le Butor,—Buff.*)

"*The bittern* is nearly as large as the common heron; its legs are stronger, body more plump and fleshy, and its neck is more thickly clothed with feathers. The beak is strong at the base; straight, sharp on the edges, and gradually tapers to an acute point: the upper mandible is brown, the under inclining to green; the mouth is wide, the gape extending beyond the eyes, with a dusky patch at each angle—the irides are yellow. The crown of the head is somewhat depressed and covered with black feathers; the throat is yellowish

white, the sides of the neck pale rust colour, variegated with black, in spotted, waved, and narrow transverse lines; and on the fore-part, the ground colour is whitish, and the feathers fall down in less broken, and darker lengthened stripes. These neck feathers, which it can raise and depress at pleasure, are long and loose, and inclining backward, cover the neck behind; those below them on the breast to the thighs, are streaked lengthwise with black, edged with yellowish white: the thighs, belly, and vent are of a dull pale yellow, clouded with dingy brown. The plumage on the back and wings is marked with black zigzag lines, bars, and streaks, upon a ground shaded with rust-colour and yellow. The bastard wings, greater coverts, and quills, are brown, barred with black. The tail, which consists only of ten feathers, is very short; the legs are of a pale green, bare a little above the knees; the claws, particularly those on the hind toes, are long and sharp, the middle one serrated.

"The female is less than the male; her plumage is darker, and the feathers on her head, breast, and neck, are shorter, and the colours not so distinctly marked. She makes an artless nest, composed chiefly of the withered stalks and leaves of the high coarse herbage in the midst of which it is placed, and lays from four to six eggs, of a greenish white colour.

"The bittern is a shy, solitary bird; it is never seen on the wing in the day-time, but sits commonly with the head erect, hid among the reeds and rushes in the marshes, where it always takes up its abodes, and from whence it will not stir, unless it is disturbed by the sportsman. When it changes its haunts, it removes in the dusk of the evening, and then, rising in a spiral direction, soars to a vast height. It flies in the same heavy manner as the heron, and might be mistaken for that bird, were it not for the singularly resounding cry which it utters from time to time while on the wing; but this is feeble, when compared to the hollow booming noise which it makes during the night time, in the breeding season, from its swampy retreats.

"The bittern, when attacked by the buzzard, or other birds of prey, defends itself with great courage, and generally beats off such assailants; neither does it betray any symptoms of fear when wounded by the sportsman, but eyes him with a keen undaunted look, and when driven to extremity, will attack him with the utmost vigour, wounding his legs, or aiming at his eyes, with its sharp and piercing bill. It was formerly

held in much estimation at the tables of the great, and is again recovering its credit as a fashionable dish.

"This bird lives upon the same water animals as the heron, for which it patiently watches, unmoved, for hours together." —*Latham.*

No. XIV.—Page 73

Wild Cat.—"The *ferus*, or *wild cat*, is three or four times as large as the house cat; the head larger and the face flatter. The teeth and claws are tremendous; its muscles very strong, as being formed by rapine; the tail is of moderate length, but very thick, marked with alternate bars of black and white, the end always black; the hips and hind parts of the lower joints of the legs are always black; the fur is very soft and fine. The general colour of these animals is of a yellowish-white, mixed with a deep gray; these colours, though they appear at first sight confusedly blended together, yet on a close inspection, will be found to be disposed like the streaks on the skin of a tiger, pointing from the back downwards, rising from a black list that runs from the head along the middle of the back to the tail.

"This animal with us may be called the *British Tiger.* It is the fiercest and most destructive beast we have; making dreadful havoc among our poultry, lambs, and kids. It inhabits the most mountainous and woody parts of these islands, living mostly in trees, and feeding only by nights. It multiplies as fast as our common cats; and often the females of the latter will quit their domestic mates, and return home pregnant by the former.

"They are taken either in traps or by shooting; in the latter case it is very dangerous only to wound them; for they will attack the person who injured them, and have strength enough to be no despicable enemy. Wild cats were formerly reckoned among the beasts of chase; as appears by the charter of Richard II. to the Abbot of Peterborough, giving him leave to hunt the hare, fox, and wild cat. The use of the fur was in lining of robes; but it was esteemed not of the most luxurious kind; for it was ordained 'that no abbess or nun should use more costly apparel than such as is made of lambs or cat's-skins.' In much earlier times, it wa salso the object of the sportsman's diversion."—*Encyclopædia Britannica.*

No. XV.—Page 83.

The Pale was the line of demarkation drawn by the English settlers between their acquired possessions and the remoter districts, which were still permitted to remain with the ancient proprietors. As this boundary was the "debatable land" of Ireland, it was the scene of constant raid and skirmish; and the *locale* of many a wild tradition is placed beside this dangerous border.

No. XVI.—Page 107.

MAXIMS ON FISHING.

The following hints are really quaint and useful.

"Do not imagine that, because a fish does not instantly dart off on first seeing you, he is the less aware of your presence; he almost on such occasion ceases to feed, and pays you the compliment of devoting his whole attention to you, whilst he is preparing for a start whenever the apprehended danger becomes sufficiently imminent.

"If you pass your fly neatly and well three times over a trout, and he refuses it, do not wait any longer for him; you may be sure he has seen the line of invitation which you have sent over the water to him, and does not intend to come.

"Remember that, in whipping with the artificial fly, it must have time, when you have drawn it out of the water, to make the whole circuit, and to be at one time straight behind you, before it can be driven out straight before you. If you give it the forward impulse too soon, you will hear a crack: take this as a hint that your fly is gone to grass.

"It appears to me that, in whipping with an artificial fly, there are only two cases in which a fish taking the fly will infallibly hook himself without your assistance, viz.:—1st, when your fly first touches the water at the end of a straight line. 2nd, when you are drawing out your fly for a new throw. In all other cases, it is necessary that, in order to hook him when he has taken the fly, you should do something with your wrist which is not easy to describe.

"If your line should fall loose and wavy into the water, it will either frighten away the fish, or he will take the fly into his mouth, without fastening himself; and when he finds that it does not answer his purpose, he will spit it out again before it has answered yours.

"Never mind what they of the old school say about play-

ing him till he is tired.' Much valuable time, and many a good fish, may be lost by this antiquated proceeding. Put him into your basket *as soon as you can.* Every thing depends on the manner in which you commence your acquaintance with him. If you can at first prevail upon him to walk a little way down the stream with you, you will have no difficulty afterwards in persuading him to let you have the pleasure of seeing him at dinner.

"Do not leave off fishing early in the evening, because your friends are tired. After a bright day, the largest fish are to be caught by whipping between sunset and dark. Even, however, in these precious moments, you will not have good sport, if you continue throwing after you have whipped your fly off. Pay attention to this; and, if you have any doubt after dusk, you may easily ascertain the point, by drawing the end of the line quickly through your hand, particularly if you do not wear gloves.

"When you have got hold of a good fish which is not very tractable, if you are married, gentle reader, think of your wife, who, like the fish, is united to you by very tender ties, which can only end with her death, or her going into weeds. If you are single, the loss of the fish, when you thought the prize your own, may remind you of some more serious disappointment."—*Jesse's Gleaning's in Natural History.*

No. XVII.—Page 123

This once celebrated mansion is immortalized in the old ballad called "Bumper Squire Jones," which chronicles the princely hospitalities of that puissant and hard-headed family. Like "the Kilruddery Foxchase," it was a mighty favourite with the stout old sportsmen of those merry days. More popular airs have caused these ancient and soul-stirring lyrics to be disused, and like those whose feats they recounted, they are now almost forgotten.

No. XVIII.—Page 144.

"Thus, after a siege of six months and twenty days, the city of Baza surrendered, on the fourth of December 1489, the festival of the glorious Santa Barbara; who is said in the Catholic calendar to preside over thunder and lightning, fire and gunpowder, and all kind of combustible explosions."—*Chronicle of the Conquest of Grenada.*

No. XIX.—Page 146.

CLAKIS, OR TREE GOOSE.

(*Anas Erythropus,—Buff. La Bernache,—Lin.*)

"The *barnacle* weighs about five pounds, and measures more than two feet in length, and nearly four and a half in breadth. The bill from the tip to the corners of the mouth, is scarcely an inch and a half long, black, and crossed with a pale reddish streak on each side: a narrow black line passes from the bill to the eyes, the irides of which are brown: the head is small, and as far as the crown, together with the cheeks and throat, white; the rest of the head and neck, to the breast and shoulders, is black. The upper part of the plumage is prettily marbled or barred with blue, gray, black, and white: the feathers of the back are black, edged with white, and those of the wing coverts and scapulars blue gray, bordered with black near the margins, and edged with white; the quills black, edged a little way from the tips with blue gray; the under parts and tail coverts white; the thighs are marked with dusky lines or spots, and are black near the knees: the tail is black, and five inches and a half long: the legs and feet dusky, very thick and short, and have a stumpy appearance.

"In severe winters, these birds are not uncommon in this kingdom, particularly on the northern and western parts, where, however, they remain only a short time, but depart early in the spring to their northern wilds, to breed and spend the summer."—*Bewick.*

No. XX.—Page 148.

"*Wild geese* are very destructive to the growing corn in the fields where they happen to halt in their migratory excursion. In some countries they are caught at those seasons in long nets, resembling those used for catching larks. To these nets the wild geese are decoyed by tame ones placed there for that purpose. Many other schemes are contrived to take these wary birds; but as they feed only in the daytime, and partake themselves to the water at night, the fowler must exert his utmost care and ingenuity in order to accomplish his ends: all must be planned in the dark, and every trace of suspicion removed, for nothing can exceed the vigilant circumspection and acute ear of the sentinel, who,

placed on some eminence, with outstretched neck surveys every thing that moves within the circle of the centre on which he takes his stand; and the instant he sounds the alarm, the whole flock betake themselves to flight."—*Anon.*

The time that wild geese feed in this country is by night, and particularly during moonlight. I have never known them either *netted or decoyed;* and all the shooter has to rely upon, is patience and a long barrel.

No. XXI.—Page 148.

(*Anas Cygnus ferus,—Lin. Le Cygne sauvage,—Buff.*)

"The *wild swan* measures five feet in length, and above seven in breadth, and weighs from thirteen to sixteen pounds. The bill is three inches long, of a yellowish white from the case to the middle, and thence to the tip black; the bare space from the bill over the eye and eyelids is yellow; the whole plumage in adult birds is of a pure white, and, next to the skin, they are clothed with a thick fine down; the legs are black.

"This species generally keep together in small flocks, or families, except in the pairing season, and at the setting in of winter. At the latter period, they assemble in immense multitudes, particularly on the large rivers and lakes of the thinly inhabited northern parts of Europe, Asia, and America; but when the extremity of the weather threatens to become insupportable, in order to shun the gathering storm, they shape their course high in the air, in divided and undiminished numbers, in search of milder climates. In such seasons, they are most commonly seen in various parts of the British isles, and in other more southern countries of Europe. The same is observed of them in the North American states. They do not, however, remain longer than till the approach of the spring, when they again retire northward to the Arctic regions to breed. A few, indeed, drop short, and perform that office by the way, for they are known to breed in some of the Hebrides, the Orkney, Shetland, and other solitary isles; but these are hardly worth notice: the great bodies of them are met with in the large rivers and lakes near Hudson's Bay, and those of Kamschatka, Lapland, and Iceland. They are said to return to the latter place in flocks of about a hundred at a time in the spring, and also to pour in upon that island from the north, in nearly the same manner, on their way southward in the autumn."—*Bewick.*

No. XXII.—Page 148.

PINTAIL DUCK.

SEA-PHEASANT, CRACKER, WINTER DUCK.

(*Anas acuta,—Lin. Le Canard, à longue queue,—Buff.*)

"This handsome-looking bird is twenty-eight inches in length, and thirty-eight in breadth, and weighs about twenty-four ounces. The bill is rather long, black in the middle, and blue on the edges; the irides reddish; the head and throat are of a rusty brown, mottled with small dark spots, and tinged behind the ears with purple; the nape and upper part of the neck are dusky, margined by a narrow white line, which runs down on each side, and falling into a broader stripe of the same colour, extends itself on the forepart as far as the breast; the rest of the neck, the breast, and the upper part of the back, are elegantly pencilled with black and white waved lines; the lower back and sides of the body are undulated in the same manner, but with lines more freckled, less distinct, and paler; the scapulars are long and pointed, each feather black down the middle, with white edges; the coverts of the wings are ash-brown, tipped with dull orange; below these the wing is obliquely crossed by the beauty-spot of glossy brown purple green, with a lower border of black and white: the spangle is formed by the outer webs and tips of the middle quills; the rest of the quills are dusky. All the tail feathers are of a brown ash-colour, with pale edges, except the two middle ones, which are black, slightly glossed with green, considerably longer than the others, and end in a point; the belly and sides of the vent are white; under tail coverts black; legs and feet small, and of a lead-colour."—*Latham.*

No. XXIII.—Page 148.

THE GOLDEN-EYE.

(*Anas Clangula,—Lin. Le Garrot,—Buff.*)

The weight of this species varies from twenty-six ounces to two pounds. The length is nineteen inches, and the breadth thirty-one. The bill is bluish black, short, thick, and

elevated at the base; the head large, slightly crested, and black, or rather of a glossy bottle-green, with violet reflections; a large white spot is placed on the space on each side between the corners of the mouth and the eyes, the irides of which are of a golden yellow; the throat, and a small portion of the upper part of the neck, are of a sooty or velvet black; the lower, to the shoulders, the breast, belly, and vent, white; but some of the side feathers, and those which cover the thighs, are tipped with black; the scapulars white and deep black; of the latter colour, are also the adjoining long tertial feathers, and those on the greater part of the back; the first fourteen primary quills, with all the outside edge of the wing, including the ridge, and a portion of the coverts, are brownish black; the middle part of the wing is white, crossed by a narrow black stripe, which is formed by the tips of the lesser coverts; tail dark hoary brown; legs short, of a reddish yellow colour, with the webs dusky; the inner and hinder toes are furnished with lateral webs; on the latter, these webs are large and flapped. Willoughby says, "the windpipe hath a labyrinth at the divarication, and besides, above swells out into a belly, or puff-like cavity."

"These birds do not congregate in large flocks, nor are they numerous on the British shores, or on the lakes in the interior. They are late in taking their departure northward in the spring, the specimens before mentioned being shot in April. In their flight they make the air whistle with the vigorous quick strokes of their wings; they are excellent divers, and seldom set foot on the shore, upon which, it is said, they walk with great apparent difficulty, and, except in the breeding season, only repair to it for the purpose of taking their repose.

"The attempts which were made by M. Baillon to domesticate these birds, he informs the Count de Buffon, quite failed of success."—*Bewick.*

No XXIV.—Page 148.

WIGEON.

WHEWER, WHIM, OR PANDLED WHEW.

(*Anas Penelope,—Lin. Le Canard siffleur,—Buff.*)

"This is nearly of the same size as the gadwall, weighing generally about twenty-three ounces, and measuring nearly

twenty inches in length, and two feet three in breadth. The bill is an inch and a half long, narrow, and serrated on the inner edges: the upper mandible is of a dark lead colour, tipped with black. The crown of the head, which is very high and narrow, is of a cream-colour, with a small spot of the same under each eye; the rest of the head, the neck, and the breast, are bright rufous chestnut, obscurely freckled on the head with black spots, and darkest on the chin and throat, which are tinged with a vinous colour: a band, composed of beautifully weaved, or indented narrow ash-brown and white lines, separates the breast and neck: the back and scapulars are marked with similar feathers, as are also the sides of the body under the wings, even as low as the thighs; but there they are paler: the belly to the vent is white; the ridge of the wing, and adjoining coverts, are dusky ash-brown; the greater coverts brown, edged with white, (in some specimens wholly white), and tipped with black, which forms an upper border to the changeable green beauty-spots of the wings, which is also bordered on the under side by another stripe, formed by the deep velvet black tips of the secondary quills: the exterior webs of the adjoining quills are white; and those next the back, which are very long, are of a deep brown (in some specimens a deep black), edged with yellowish-white: the greater quills are brown; the vent and upper tail coverts black.

"Wigeons commonly fly in small flocks during the night, and may be known from others by their whistling note while they are on the wing. They are easily domesticated in places where there is plenty of water; and are much admired for their beauty, sprightly look, and busy frolicksome manners."—*Bewick.*

No. XXV.—Page 148.

TEAL.

(*Anas Crecca,—Lin. La petite Sarcelle,—Buff.*)

This beautiful little duck seldom exceeds eleven ounces in weight, or measures more, stretched out, than fourteen inches and a half in length, and twenty-three and a half in breadth.

The bill is a dark lead-colour, tipped with black; irides pale hazel; a glossy bottle-green patch, edged on the upper side with pale brown, and beneath with cream-coloured white, covers each eye, and extends to the nape of the

neck; the rest of the head, and the upper part of the neck, are of a deep reddish chestnut, darkest on the forehead, and freckled on the chin and about the eyes with cream-coloured spots; the hinder part of the neck, the shoulders, part of the scapulars, sides under the wings, and lower belly, towards the vent, are elegantly pencilled with black, ash-brown, and white transverse waved lines; the breast, greatly resembling the beautifully spotted appearance of an India shell, is of a pale-brown, or reddish yellow, and each feather is tipped with a roundish heart-shaped black spot; the belly is a cream-coloured white: back and rump brown, each feather edged with a paler colour; vent black; the primary quills, lesser and greater coverts, are brown; the last deeply tipped with white, which forms a bar across the wings; the first six of the secondary quills are of a fine velvet black; those next to them, towards the scapulars, are of a most resplendent glossy green, and both are tipped with white, forming the divided black and green bar, or beauty spot of the wings.

The tail consists of fourteen feathers, of a hoary brown colour. The female, which is less than the male, is prettily freckled about the head and neck with brown and white. She has not the green patch behind the eyes, but a brown streak there, which extends itself to the nape of the neck; the crown of the head is dark drown; the upper mandible yellow on the edges, olive green on the sides, and olive brown on the ridge; nail black, and the under bill yellow; breast, belly, and vent glossy yellowish-white, spotted on the latter parts with brown, each feather bordered with rusty brown, and edged with gray; the wings and legs nearly the same as those of the male.

The teal is common in England in the winter months, but it is uncertain whether or not they remain throughout the year to breed, as is the case in France. The female makes a large nest, composed of soft dried grasses (and it is said the pith of rushes), lined with feathers, cunningly concealed in a hole among the roots of reeds and bulrushes near the edge of the water; and some assert that it rests on the surface of the water, so as to rise and fall with it. The eggs are of the size of those of a pigeon, six or seven in number, and of a dull white colour, marked with small brownish spots; but it appears that they sometimes lay ten or twelve eggs, for Buffon remarks that that number of young are seen in clusters on the pools, feeding on cresses, wild chervil, &c., and

no doubt as they grow up they feed, like other ducks, on the various seeds, grasses, and water-plants, as well as upon the smaller animated beings with which all stagnant waters are so abundantly stored. The teal is highly esteemed for the excellent flavour of its flesh; it is known to breed, and remain throughout the year in various temperate climates of the world, and is met with as far northward as Iceland in the summer."—*Bewick.*

Of all the prizes that a wildfowl-shooter could wish to meet with, a flock of teal is the very first. Independently of their being by far the best birds of the whole Anas tribe, they are so much easier of access, and require such a slight blow, that no matter whether you are prepared for wild fowl, partridges, or snipes, may, at most times, with very little trouble, contrive to get near them; and this being once done, you have only to shoot straight to be pretty sure of killing.

I have seen teal "duck the flash," though never but once, and then I had rather a slow-shooting gun.

"If you spring a teal, he will not soar up, and leave the country, like a wild-duck, but most probably keep along the brook, like a sharp flying woodcock, and then drop suddenly down; but you must keep your eye on the place, as he is very apt to get up again, and fly to another before he will quietly settle. He will frequently, too, swim down stream the moment he drops, so that if you do not cast your eye quickly that way, instead of continuing to look for him in one spot, he will probably catch sight of you, and fly up while your attention is directed to the wrong place. If the brook in which you find him is obscured by many trees, you had better direct your follower to make a large circle, and get ahead of and watch him, in case he should slyly skim away down the brook, and by this means escape from you altogether. You should avoid firing at random, as this may drive him quite away from your beat."—*Hawker.*

No. XXVI.—Page 151.

COMMON SNIPE.

(*Snipe or Heather-bleater, Scalopax Ballinago,—Lin. La Becassine,—Buff.*)

The common snipe is generally about four ounces in weight, and measures twelve inches in length, and fourteen in

breadth. The bill is nearly three inches long; in some pale brown, in others greenish yellow, rather flat and dark at the tip, and very smooth in the living bird; but it soon becomes dimpled, like the end of a thimble, after the bird is dead: the head is divided lengthwise by three reddish or rusty white lines, and two of black; one of the former passes along the middle of the crown, and one above each eye; a darkish mark is extended from the corners of the mouth nearly to each eye and the auriculars, from spots of the same colour; the chin and forepart of the neck is yellowish white, the former plain, the latter spotted with brown. The scapulars are elegantly striped lengthwise on one web, and barred on the other with black and yellow; the quills are dusky, the edge of the primaries, and tip of the secondaries, white; those next to the back barred with black, and pale rufous: the breast and belly are white; the tail coverts are of a reddish-brown, and so long as to cover the greater part of it; the tail consists of fourteen feathers, the webs of which, as far as they are concealed by the coverts, are dusky, thence downward tawny or rusty orange, and irregularly marked or crossed with black. The tip is commonly of a pale reddish yellow, but in some specimens nearly white; the legs are pale green.

The common residence of the snipe is in small bogs, or wet grounds, where it is almost constantly digging and nibbling in the soft mud, in search of its food, which consists chiefly of a very small kind of transparent worm, about half an inch long; it is said also to eat slugs, and the insects and grubs, of various kinds, which breed in great abundance in those slimy stagnant places. In these retreats, when undisturbed, the snipe walks leisurely, with its head erect, and at short intervals keeps moving the tail. But in this state of tranquillity it is very rarely to be seen, as it is extremely watchful, and perceives the sportsman and his dog at a great distance, and instantly conceals itself among the variegated withered herbage so similar in appearance to its own plumage, that it is almost impossible to discover it while squatted motionless in its seat; it seldom, however, waits the near approach of any person, particularly in open weather, but commonly springs and takes flight at a distance beyond the reach of the gun. When first disturbed, it utters a kind of feeble whistle, and generally flies against the wind, turning nimbly in a zigzag direction for two or three hundred paces, and sometimes soaring almost out of sight; its note is then something

like the bleating of a goat, but is changed to a singular humming or drumming noise, uttered in its descent.

From its vigilance and manner of flying, it is one of the most difficult birds to shoot. Some sportsmen can imitate their cries, and by that means draw them within reach of their shot; others of a less honourable description, prefer the more certain and less laborious method of catching them in the night by a springe, like that which is used for the woodcock.

The snipe is migratory, and is met with in all countries; like the woodcock, it shuns the extremes of heat and cold by keeping upon the bleak moors in summer, and seeking the shelter of the valleys in winter. In severe frosts and storms of snow, driven by extremity of the weather, snipes seek the unfrozen boggy places, runners from springs, or any open streamlet of water, and they are sure to be found, often in considerable numbers, in these places, where they sometimes set till nearly trodden upon before they will take their flight.

Although it is well known that numbers of snipes leave Great Britain in the spring, and return in the autumn, yet it is equally ascertained that many constantly remain, and breed in various parts of the country, for their nest and young ones have been so often found as to leave no doubt of this fact. The female makes her nest in the most retired and inaccessible part of the morass, generally under the stump of an alder or willow; it is composed of withered grass and a few feathers: her eggs, four or five in number, are of an oblong shape, and of a greenish colour, with rusty spots; the young ones run off soon after they are freed from the shell, but they are attended by the parent birds until their bills have acquired a sufficient firmness to enable them to provide for themselves.

The snipe is a very fat bird, but its fat does not cloy, and very rarely disagrees even with the weakest stomach. It is much esteemed as a delicious and well-flavoured dish, and is cooked in the same manner as the woodcock.

No. XXVII.—Page 152.

"Upon the Sussex coast, woodcocks have been seen at their first dropping in considerable numbers in the churchyard, and even in the streets of Rye, but during the night, the usual time of their flying, they removed farther inland, and dispersed. At their first coming on that coast, they are com-

monly poor, as if wasted by their long journey," and are sometimes scurfy, though not so much as before their return in the spring; and it is remarkable, that when the woodcock first arrives, the taste of its flesh is quite different from what it is afterwards; it is very white, short and tender, and seems to have little or no blood in it; but after it has been in this country a considerable time, the flesh becomes more tough, stringy, and fibrous, like that of domestic fowls. If a woodcock is shot just before his departure, it bleeds plentifully, whereas, at the beginning of winter, scarce any blood flows from the wounds; by this it seems, that in those countries where they have their summer residence, they have a different nourishment to that they here find. Probably the luxuriant and succulent food which they meet with among us, prepares them for breeding in those countries, where they retire with the companions of their choice."—*Daniel.*

* * * * *

"The woodcock feeds indiscriminately upon earth-worms, small beetles, and various kinds of larvæ, and its stomach sometimes contains seeds, which I suspect have been taken up in boring among the excrements of cattle; yet the stomach of this bird has something of the gizzard character, though not so much as that of the landrail, which I have found half filled with the seeds of grasses, and even containing corn, mixed with May-bugs, earth-worms, grasshoppers, and caterpillars."—*Sir Humphrey Davy.*

No. XXVIII.—Page 152.

WOODCOCK.

(*Scalopax Rusticola,—Lin. La Becasse,—Buff.*)

The woodcock measures fourteen inches in length, and twenty-six in breadth, and generally weighs about twelve ounces. The shape of the head is remarkable, being rather triangular than round, with the eyes placed near the top, and the ears very forward, nearly on a line with the corners of the mouth. The upper mandible, which measures about three inches, is furrowed nearly its whole length, and at the tip it projects beyond and hangs over the under one, ending in a kind of knob, which, like those of others of the same genus, is susceptible of the finest feeling, and calculated by that means, aided perhaps by an acute smell, to find the small worms in the soft moist ground, from whence it extracts them with its

sharp-pointed tongue. With the bill it also turns over and tosses the fallen leaves in search of the insects which shelter underneath. The crown of the head is of an ash colour, the nape and back part of its neck black, marked with three bars of rusty red; a black line extends from the corners of the mouth to the eyes, the orbits of which are pale buff; the whole under parts are yellowish white, numerously barred with dark waved lines. The tail consists of twelve feathers, which, like the quills, are black, and indented across with reddish spots on the edges; the tip is ash-coloured above, and of a glossy white below. The legs are short, feathered to the knees, and, in some, are of a bluish cast, in others, of a sallow flesh-colour. The upper parts of the plumage are so marbled, spotted, barred, streaked, and variegated, that to describe them with accuracy would be difficult and tedious. The colours, consisting of black, white, gray, ash, brown, red, rufous, and yellow, are so disposed in rows, crossed and broken at intervals by lines and marks of different shapes, that the whole seems to the eye, at a little distance, blended together and confused, which makes the bird appear exactly like the withered stalks and leaves of ferns, sticks, moss, and grasses, which form the back-ground of the scenery by which it is sheltered in its moist and solitary retreats. The sportsman only being accustomed to it, is enabled to discover it, and his leading marks are his full dark eye, and glossy silver white-tipped tail. In plumage the female differs very little from the male, and, like most other female birds, only by being less brilliant in her colours.

"The flesh of the woodcock is held in very high estimation, and hence it is eagerly sought after by the sportsman." —*Bewick.*

* * * * *

Woodcocks have been known to settle upon a vessel at sea. Mr. Travers, of Cornwall, records one instance, when at a distance from land unusual for birds to be seen, a bird was discovered hovering over the ship; when first discerned, it was high in the air, but gradually descended, and after taking several circuits round, at length alighted on the deck; it was so wearied as to be taken up by the hand,—probably this bird had lost its companion, or, by the force of winds was driven from the true aërial track. In 1799, a couple of woodcocks, seeking shelter from a gale of wind, alighted upon the Glory man-of-war, at that time cruising in the Channel.

In its flight, the woodcock, like other birds, is attracted by a glare of light, and many instances have occurred, at the Cromer and Eddystone lighthouses, of their falling victims to it; but in 1796, at the lighthouse upon the Hill of Hoath, the man who attends, while trimming his lamps, was surprised by a violent stroke against the windows, which broke a pane of plate-glass, cast for the place, and more than three-eighths of an inch thick. On examining the balcony that surrounds the light, he found a woodcock, which had flown with such violence as to break his bill, head, breast-bone, and both wings; the man had often found birds which had killed themselves, by flying against the windows, but never before knew the glass to be injured."—*Daniel.*

* * * * *

In speaking of the *flight of birds*, Mr. Rennie says, "Their capability of performing flights much longer than there is any necessity for supposing, may be proved by numerous facts. Even a sparrow has been calculated to fly at the rate of not less than thirty miles per hour, and many experiments prove that the eider-duck can fly ninety miles in the same time. The common kite (*Falco Milvus*) has been observed to pass, without great exertion, over a space of a quarter of a league in a minute, and it could fly with ease from Cape Pruth to the Land's End in a single day. M. Audobon, the distinguished ornithologist, has shot the passenger pigeon of America, and on dissection, found its stomach full of fresh rice, which to have resisted the digestive process, must have been swallowed *not many hours* preceding its death, but could not have been obtained within eight hundred miles of the place where it was killed. Though the nightingale, the willow wren, and other birds of passage, fly with only half the swiftness, they may easily arrive in most parts of the south of Europe, or the north of Africa, in a few days."

No. XXIX.—Page 153.

GREAT SNIPE. (*Scalopax Media.*)

"Size, between the woodcock and snipe; weight eight ounces; length sixteen inches; bill four inches long, and like that of the woodcock; crown of the head black, divided down the middle by a pale stripe; over and beneath each eye, another of the same; the upper parts of the body very like the common snipe; beneath white; the feather edged with

dusky black on the neck, breast, and sides; and those of the belly spotted with the same, but the middle of it is plain white; quills dusky, tail reddish. The two middle feathers plain, the others barred with black; legs black."—*Latham.* He adds, this is a rare species. A fine specimen of it was shot in Lancashire, now in the Leverian Museum, said also to have been met with in Kent.

* * * * *

"There are a good many snipes in the vicinity of Gothenburgh; the marshes, however, frequented by those birds, are not very extensive, and may easily be hunted in much less than a day; but if a person be well acquainted with the ground, better snipe-shooting is hardly to be met with in any country. As a proof of this, I have bagged upwards of thirty brace of those birds in seven or eight hours. These were either the common or the double snipe, as I was careless of wasting my powder and shot about the jack or half-snipe. The double or solitary snipe, I usually found singly, or at most in pairs. They were generally so fat as hardly to be able to fly. Indeed, if flushed, their flight was usually very short, and they presently settled again. They were nearly twice as large as the common snipe, and from their heavy and steady flight, they presented the easiest mark possible. They are considered to be most delicious eating; four couple was the greatest number of those birds that I ever killed in Sweden in any one day. They were by no means plentiful in the vicinity of Gothenburgh."—*Lloyd.*

* * * * *

"The double snipe is a bird of passage, and among those which arrive the latest; in colour, speckled gray, with a long bill. At the end of the month of July, when the meadows are mowed, the shooting of these birds with the pointer commences, and continues till towards the end of September. They may also be shot during the spring; but I have observed this has diminished the autumn shooting. In the whole round of sporting, this affords one of the greatest pleasures. These birds are easy to shoot; and in some places fifty or sixty, ay, considerably more may be shot in a day, particularly in autumn, when they are so fat that they almost burst their skins. They are most delicious eating."—*Grieff.*

No. XXX.—Page 165.

Snipes, when plenty, afford very excellent sport, it being allowed to be the pleasantest, on account of the quick succes-

sion of shots; this is also the best shooting for practice, seldom failing to make indifferent shots most excellent ones. There is no shooting that presents such a variety of shots, scarcely any two being alike. These birds usually fly against the wind, therefore, every snipe-shooter should walk down it, as by that means the bird, if he rises before him, will fly back, and coming round him; describe a kind of circle, or at least his flight, for a certain distance, will not lengthen the shot, allowing him a certain time to cover the bird, and take good aim; for if he gets up before him, and should by chance go down the wind, or from him, it is then the most difficult shot. It will be proper in this case to let the bird get a little distance from him as then he will fly steadier, and the slightest grain will fetch him to the ground.

* * * * *

"When shooting snipes in the vicinity of Gothenburg, one's sport mainly depends on the weather. If it blows hard from the westward, a strong current sets into the river from the North Sea; this impedes its course, and causes it to overflow its bounds, in which case many of the marshes become partially overflown, when the snipes, from finding little shelter, usually lie light, and are difficult of approach. If, on the contrary, the wind should be moderate, or from the eastward, and the water consequently low, those birds have abundance of cover, and it is easy therefore to get within range of them." —*Lloyd.*

No. XXXI.—Page 166.

"I saw several hares as large as a fawn, and shot one of them, which weighed more than six-and-twenty pounds; and if I had had a good greyhound, I dare say the ship's company might have lived on hare two days in the week."—*Byron's Voyage.*

"While we were on shore we shot some wild ducks and a hare; the hare ran two miles after he was wounded, though it appeared when he was taken up, that a ball had passed quite through the body."—*Ibid.*

"We shot a hare, however, and a little ugly animal which stunk so abominably that none of us could go near him."—*Ibid.*

"The flesh of the hares here is as *white as snow*, and nothing can be better tasted."—*Ibid.*

THE END.

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